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CECILIA HOWARD:

OR,

THE YOUNG LADY

WHO HAD

FINISHED HER EDUCATION.

BY T. S. ARTHUR,

AUTHOR OF "INSUBORDINATION," "SIX NIGHTS WITH THE WASHINGTONIANS,"
"SWEETHEARTS AND WIVES," &c. &c.

NEW YORK:

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CECILIA HOWARD:

OR,

THE YOUNG LADY WHO HAD FINISHED HER EDUCATION.

CHAPTER I.

Cecilia and Mrs. Howard—Conversation about old Uncle Peter—His appearance—Some close cutting—Finishing off a modern young lady—Uncle Peter's comments, humorous, satirical, sensible and serious.

“I declare, ma, I’m getting right down ashamed of Uncle Peter!” Cecilia Howard said, with some warmth, giving her trim little head, at the same time, a half disdainful toss. He not only dresses in such a queer, old-fashioned style, but is full of such queer ways and queer notions. No matter who is here, bolt into the parlor he will come, with his big heavy stick going thump, thump, thump upon the floor, hard enough to knock a hole into the carpet. The very sound makes me creep all over. I do wish he wouldn’t come here every day as he does just at the time when we receive our morning calls. It’s a downright annoyance, so it is!”

“Why, how you talk, Cecilia!” Mrs. Howard rejoined, in a half reproving tone. “You must not mind your Uncle Peter. You know that you have been away to school for five months, and as you will only remain at home four weeks, he wishes to be with you as much as possible. He has a good heart, and loves you very much I know.”

“He has a strange way of showing it, then,” was the reply to this. “Isn’t he always taking me off, or snubbing me up, or doing or saying something to annoy me. I declare, the very sight of him is beginning to make me feel nervous! There! That’s his ring now! I wonder he hasn’t broken the bell-rope long ago. He’s just in time to meet our morning visitors. Isn’t it too bad??”

The object of Miss Cecilia Howard’s animadversions soon

entered the splendidly furnished parlors, where the mother and daughter were seated, elegantly attired, and waiting for their morning calls. He was an old man, with a countenance expressive of benevolence, united with some humor, and a good deal of shrewdness. His dark gray eyes had, usually, a pleasant twinkle; but often became fixed in a keen, penetrating gaze, that was, at times, especially annoying to his niece. He usually wore a coat of the color known as "pepper and salt," which hung loosely upon his person, like, as Cecilia sometimes elegantly expressed it, a "shirt on a bean pole." His waistcoat, darker by several shades than his coat, was of snuff color, double-breasted, long and loose, with huge pockets, and several inches of the lower corners cut off at an obtuse angle with the front edge of the garment. He did not wear small clothes and fair top boots, but what was worse in the eyes of his niece, grown remarkably critical of late, he wore a *queue* above, and large, loose, coarse shoes and yarn stockings, below. But with all this singularity of dress, as Cecilia thought it, he was scrupulously neat and clean in every respect. A description of his character would be useless here, as the reader will have an opportunity of hearing his sentiments, and perceiving his peculiarities and manner of expression as our story progresses.

"Ah, good morning! Good morning!" he said, in a cheerful tone, entering the parlor with his usual active tread, and letting his cane strike heavily upon the floor at each step. "How are you to-day, 'Celia? And how are you, Hannah?"

"We're very well, brother," Mrs. Howard replied, in a dignified way. "Take a seat."

"Of course I'll do that, Hannah, without being asked. You did not suppose I was a prim young dandy, who would stand twisting off the ends of his fingers until offered a chair? O no. I'm at home wherever I go."

As he said this he placed his large, white fur hat, which had seen some little service, upon the pier table, between two neatly arranged flower saucers, and stood his heavy cane against one of the pure white marble columns supporting the mantel-piece.

"Well, 'Celia," he resumed, as he seated himself heavily in a chair, "how are you enjoying your visit home?"

"I am enjoying it very much, Uncle," the niece replied, smiling pleasantly, for she could not find it in her heart to treat him coldly.

"Uncle—Uncle—It's all Uncle now! But before you went to that boarding school, or rather that finishing shop, as I call it, it was Uncle Peter. Call me Uncle Peter, child! That's my name."

"But I'm sure Uncle sounds a great deal better," replied Cecilia.

"I'm sure it does not, and begging your pardon. Uncle Peter is my name, and what is right always sounds best. And there is

your mother, too, she could call me Peter, until within a few years. But now her mouth has got a kink in it, I suppose, and can get out nothing but *brother*."

"Peter is such a vulgar name, Uncle."

"Indeed! And how long since you made that discovery, pray?"

"O, as to that, ever since I could think at all, I have thought so."

"Really! That is something new! A vulgar name! Bless the child! Her head must be turned. But why is it vulgar, Celia?"

"Oh, because it is vulgar. Every clodhopper is named Peter."

"Then it follows of course that I am a clodhopper."

"O no, I didn't say so, nor mean to say so. I only said that you had a vulgar name."

"Was the Apostle Peter a clodhopper?"

"Of course not. You know that I didn't mean to refer to him, Uncle."

"Say Uncle Peter!"

"Uncle Peter, then."

"That'll do. It sounds natural, and what is more, affectionate. But let us see? Ah! was Peter the Hermit a clodhopper? A low vulgar fellow?"

"No."

"Or Peter the Great? You've heard of that individual, I presume."

"Oh don't talk so, brother. You only worry Cecilia," interposed Mrs. Howard.

"Say Peter," rejoined the incorrigible old man.

"Peter, then, if that will please you. And now, will you do something to please me?"

"I am sure I don't know. What is it?"

"You wish to be called Peter?"

"Exactly! That is by my sister—for it is my name. When we were children together, you always called me Peter. And I believe I'm no older than you now than I was then."

"Very well. Now if you wish me to conform to your prejudices, I wish you to conform, in some things, to mine."

"All right. Now speak out plump and plain."

"I wish, then, to be called sister."

"Indeed! Well, what do I call you?"

"You call me Hannah."

"Very well. Aint that your name?"

"Yes, but—"

"Aint it a very good, substantial old name, worth half a dozen of your Malvinas, Cecilias, Cordelias, and Deldabosas? I think so."

"Yes, but I'd rather be called sister."

"And I'd rather call you Hannah. I like the name. It reminds me of good old times—of the days when we were young."

"But we are young no longer, brother. And—"

"Say Peter."

"No, I shall do no such thing. You are my brother, and I'll call you so. As I was going to say, we are no longer children, and should put away childish things. It looks silly for persons of our age to be calling each other by their Christian names, especially before people."

"To be saying Peter and Hannah, you mean."

"Yes, to be saying Peter and Hannah, or using any other Christian names."

"What does your husband call you?" asked Uncle Peter, looking at his sister with half closed eyes, in each of which was a shrewd twinkle.

"He calls me Mrs. Howard."

"In company?"

"Yes."

"I can remember when he didn't even do that."

"Really, brother—"

"Say, Peter."

"I won't do any such thing. So you may just set your heart at rest on that score."

"There—there, keep cool," the old man interrupted her with a pleasant smile and a soothing tone. "Call me what you please before people. But say 'Peter,' just to oblige me, when we are alone. It sounds more natural."

Then turning to his niece, he said—

"The next term will be your last at school, Cecilia?"

"Yes, Uncle Peter, I shall finish my education next spring."

"Finish your education, did you say, Cecilia?" the old man asked, in a peculiar tone, squinting up his eyes, and looking his niece steadily in the face.

"Yes, Uncle, I said finish my education."

"Indeed! I had no idea of that! You have far exceeded my most sanguine expectations."

"Now you are jesting with me, Uncle. But I am serious. The principal of our seminary said, when I past my last examination, that I was perfect in music, dancing and drawing; and Mons. Parbleu assures me that by spring, I will speak French and Italian as well as a Parisian, or a Florentine. I've been all through astronomy, geology, conchology and flower painting, and nearly every thing else taught at our institution, which you know is the best and most fashionable in the country. By next spring, I shall get through all that they can teach me, and then, I should like to know, Uncle, if I shall not have finished my education?"

"And only sixteen!" Uncle Peter said, lifting his hands and eyes in mock astonishment.

"You needn't make fun, Uncle Peter."

"And so you will really finish your education in the spring?"

"Certainly I will." And the tones of the fair young girl indicated that she felt annoyed by her Uncle's manner.

"Of course, then, you already know how to roast a piece of beef well?"

"Why, Uncle!" she exclaimed with a strong expression of surprise.

"You are surprised at the question. And well you may be, for it does seem like a foolish one to ask a young lady who is just about receiving the finishing touch to her education. You can roast a piece of beef then to perfection? Well, I am glad of that, for it is quite a necessary accomplishment. And of course you are an adept at puddings and pastry?"

"Indeed, Uncle, that is too bad; I——"

"Don't get out of patience with old Uncle Peter, Cecilia. I only asked the question. I am glad that you are not deficient here, for I like a good old-fashioned Indian pudding, and a plain pumpkin pie. You must make some before you return to school just for my sake. And you pickle and preserve very nicely, of course?"

"Uncle!——"

"Don't be offended, Cecilia, at my asking the question. I have so little confidence in your young ladies' finishing shops of the present day, that I almost feared such good, old-fashioned, useful branches of education were not taught in them. But I see that I have done them injustice. Well, you can roast a piece of beef well, can make pies and puddings, pickles and preserves. And of course you can bake a good loaf of bread?"

"I declare, Uncle, this is too bad! I——"

"Ah! right again, I see! But come, come, Cecilia! you must not look so indignant. I mean well, you know. There is no accomplishment, I can assure you, like that of knowing how to make a good loaf of bread. Bread, you know, is called the staff of life. But I say *good* bread is the staff of life. The vile, heavy, and sour stuff brought to one half of the tables in this city, is enough to kill the people. It really gladdens my heart to think that my niece has learned to make what may truly be called bread. How wise have been your mother and teachers in this matter. Your husband and children will never be cursed with that modern disease, which springs from modern ignorance of housewifery, called Dyspepsia. And you can cut and fit your own dresses, with a little aid from your mother?"

"Uncle, I cannot, and I will not be catechised in this way—I——"

"H-u-s-h! Keep your lively young feelings as cool and calm as the bosom of a lake. You know that your old Uncle loves

you, and questions you thus for his own satisfaction. And if you knew the delight he experienced in finding that such important branches of your education were not neglected, you would forgive his fond inquisitiveness. Every young lady should know how to make her own dresses, for when she gets married and has a family, she can make or oversee the making of not only her own, but the garments of the different members of her family. Millinery, too——”

“Why, Uncle Peter! That is too bad!”

“I did not question, my dear Cecilia, your knowledge of this useful branch of education. I was only about speaking of its importance, not so much in the light of an accomplishment, as a means whereby, in case of any future reverse in life, you might be able to make an honest and comfortable living. Dress-making, too, is all-important, as a branch of female education, looking to this very end. For in this country, there are so many ups and downs, that no one knows when his or her time may come to be thrown upon the world, with no dependence but individual resources. I have known many instances in my time——”

“But, Uncle——”

“Many instances, I was going to say, Cecilia, of young ladies, rich and fashionable young ladies, but with educations sadly neglected, who, on account of the unexpected failure of their fathers, have been compelled to go and learn the millinery or dress-making business; and who have afterwards maintained themselves, and in some instance set up the business, and assisted to educate their younger brothers and sisters.”

“I would die first, Uncle!” Cecilia ejaculated with indignant emphasis.

“Rather than not thus devote your knowledge and best energies to the support of your brothers and sisters, were your father thus unfortunate! Noble girl! How much credit my sister deserves for her judicious care over you! And you have also been taught something of your requisite duties in case of sickness!—How to treat a burn—how to act in case of a sudden attack of a child, in the middle of the night, with that dreadful disease, the croup? In what manner to proceed should a child get any thing in its throat? You understand all this, too?”

“Indeed, I don’t understand a word of it, and don’t wish to!”

“Cecilia!” said the old gentleman in a tone of well affected surprise.

“Well, I don’t then, I can tell you! And I don’t know how to do any of the common servants’ and serving women’s duties you have been talking about.”

“What! not know how to make a bonnet?”

“No!”

“Nor your own dresses?”

“No!”

“Nor how to make bread?”

“No, indeed don’t I! That’s servants’ work!”

“Nor to pickle and preserve?”

“No!”

“Nor how to make puddings and pies?”

“No!”

“Nor how to roast meat, and do the general cooking of a family?”

“No! No! No!”

“Poor girl!” ejaculated Uncle Peter, with a look of profound sorrow and astonishment.—“She is about *finishing her education*, and yet knows nothing of any useful employment. Ah me! what will become of her?”

“You are disposed to be facetious, Uncle,” Cecilia now said, recovering herself by an effort, for although she felt provoked at him, she did not wish to be so, and therefore endeavored to put away such unkind feelings.

“Indeed, then, my child,” Uncle Peter said, his tone and manner entirely changing, “I am serious when I say that your finished education will be of little use to you, if all the branches I have named be neglected.”

“I am sure I cannot understand you, Uncle.”

“Then I will try to make myself comprehended. What do you expect to be or to do when you become a woman?”

“When I become a woman! Why, am I not a woman now?”

“A woman!”

“Yes, a woman!” And Cecilia drew herself up and looked exceedingly dignified.

“The girls didn’t become women so soon when I was young. But ah me! times are changed. Well, what do you expect to be or do, when you leave school?”

“Why, I expect to enjoy myself awhile, going into company. And then”—hesitating.

“Well, and what then, Cecilia? Speak out.”

“Then I expect to be married.”

“Do you? Ah! so I supposed. And then you expect to live in a house of your own?”

“Of course I do! Don’t all married people?”

“Then, seriously, Cecilia, I should like to know what great use music, and dancing, and drawing, and flower-painting, and French, and Italian, and all the other things you are learning, are going to be to you after you are married, and have a house of your own?”

“Why, a great deal of use.”

“Well, let us hear what the use is to be.”

“They will not only be my passport into good society, but will add to the social pleasures of home.”

“So far so good! But do you expect to be in society the greater part of your time? Will nothing require your attention or your

care, but visitings and social recreations?" Uncle Peter asked, who could be sensible and serious when he chose to be so.

"Nothing that I know of."

"Poor child! You have much yet to learn, I see; and what is worse, the lesson will be a hard one."

This was said half musingly; and then Uncle Peter fell into a deep reverie, which was interrupted by the entrance of company, when he, feeling but little inclined to sit and listen to an hour's fashionable gossip, took his hat, and departed.

CHAPTER II.

The Education finished—Uncle Peter's visit to his niece on her return—A little more plain talk—All parties offended—The old man's solicitude—Preparations for "Coming out"—Uncle Peter's warning.

In due time, Cecilia Howard returned to the boarding-school, a hundred miles away from home—(there is not, of course, a *good* college, school, or seminary of learning, within a hundred miles of any place)—and there went on to finish her education, which was fully completed by the ensuing spring, when she was returned to her parents, at the ripe age of sixteen and a half years, thoroughly accomplished, and literally full of acquirements.

"That's Uncle Peter's ring, I know," Cecilia remarked to her mother, as the bell rang long and loudly, about eleven o'clock on the morning after her arrival at home.

"Yes, that's your uncle, of course. He was here yesterday, and I told him that we were looking for you hourly."

"Is he as queer as ever, ma?"

"Yes, and a little more so, it seems to me. The fact is, he appears to grow more and more vulgar and singular in his notions every day."

At this stage of the remarks about Uncle Peter, that individual entered, dressed precisely as described in the last chapter, with his cane falling quickly and heavily at every step. Cecilia arose as he came in, advanced a few steps to meet him, with a mincing gait, and an air of dignified ceremony, such as became a young lady of her age, station and accomplishments.

Uncle Peter loved his niece with a strong and deep affection, and had so loved her since she was a child. Her manner chilled his feelings, but not so much so as to prevent his grasping her hand, and shaking it with a hearty good will, and then kissing her fair young cheek familiarly and tenderly, but, as she thought, rudely and roughly. Still, the earnest affection of the old man

could not but awaken in her heart some touches of the love with which she had regarded him before she entered a fashionable boarding-school, over a hundred miles from home,—and she said, with a smile of pleasure, half natural, half artificial—

“I am really glad to see you once more, uncle.”

“And glad enough am I to see you, ‘Celia! And doubly glad to know that we have got you safe out of that finishing shop, before they had polished you up so exquisitely as to be fit for nothing except to put upon the mantel-piece for a parlor ornament. But how have you been, my little pet?” And he patted her cheek fondly.

“I have been very well, uncle,” Cecilia replied, drawing herself up, as if shrinking, half offended, from this familiarity.

“Nonsense! child! Say Uncle Peter!” the old man responded, a little pettishly. For the dignified, womanly reserve, so cold and ceremonious, with which his niece received him, worried him a good deal, for the moment.

“There, brother, don’t let us hear any thing more about that, if you please?” Mrs. Howard interposed.

“Say Peter, will you, Hannah! That is my name, and by that name I am going to be called.”

“But you’re foolish about this matter, brother.”

“Say Peter.”

“Peter, then, for peace sake.”

“Very well, that will do.”

“As I was going to say, you are very foolish about this matter of being called Peter. I’m sure that brother and sister sound a great deal more affectionate and natural. Any body can be called Peter and Hannah, but not every body brother and sister.”

“O yes. It is easy enough to invent specious reasonings now for brother-and-sistering it. But why didn’t you think of this ten years ago? It’s all miserable pride, and affection of something not felt, Hannah, and I’m not the one to humor or fall in with any thing of that kind. So don’t let me hear any more of this uncle and brother.”

“But, uncle.”

“Peter!”

“Oh, I forgot! Uncle Peter—If I must, I suppose I must.—But as I was going to say—”

“Don’t, if you please, say any thing more about that. I am too old to be argued out of my notions of right and wrong by a young lady just from the hot-bed of a boarding-school, even if she has *finished* her education!” Uncle Peter replied, rather warmly, and in a tone of sarcasm.

“That is hardly kind, Uncle Peter,” Cecilia replied, her voice slightly trembling, and the tears gathering in her eyes.

“It is kinder far than it seems, child,” the old man said, in a changed tone, the effect of his words upon Cecilia being greater than he had expected.

A long silence, somewhat painful to the whole party, followed. This was broken by the entrance of some visitors, young friends of Cecilia, who, having already heard of her return, had called to congratulate her upon having finished her studies. For about five minutes poor old Uncle Peter's ears were stunned by the outpouring of a cataract of compliments, questions and congratulations, uttered in loud voices. The first flutter at length over, all parties seated, and the conversation becoming more coherent, one young lady said—

“Do you intend coming out this summer, Cecilia?—or have you decided to wait till the next fashionable season?”

“Till winter, you mean?”

“Yes.”

Uncle Peter pricked up his ears at this.

“We hav’n’t decided that matter,” Cecilia replied, with a half glance towards her uncle, whom she heartily wished away.

“I think I’d wait until late in the fall if I were you,” resumed the first speaker.

“Why so?”

“Oh, because you will be able to make a much more decided impression—and what is better, be able to follow it up for two or three months. But if you should make your appearance at any of the few parties that will be given this season, you will get stale by next winter. You might go to the springs this summer, and stay for two or three days, just to create a little sensation, and prepare for coming out in the fall.”

This was more than the patience of Uncle Peter could stand, and he said, the moment the young lady had ceased speaking, with a warmth of manner, and a cutting irony in his tone that were unusual to him,—

“She had a great deal better go into the kitchen and learn how to bake a loaf of good bread!”

“Indeed, brother, you are too bad!” ejaculated Mrs. Howard, while Cecilia crimsoned with mortification.

“Say Peter!” was the incorrigible old man’s rejoinder.

This sent the color to the face of Mrs. Howard in a supply almost as liberal as that which suffused the cheeks and forehead of her daughter. But she recovered herself as quickly as possible, remarking with a smile, as she glanced at her visitors—

“My brother is a gentleman of the old school, and therefore does not sympathize with modern customs. He thinks a young lady ought not to make her appearance in company until she is twenty-one or two.”

“Twenty-one or two!” exclaimed one of the visitors. “La me! I shall begin to think myself an old maid at twenty-one.”

“And pray, how old are you, *madam?*” Uncle Peter asked, in a grave tone..

“ Me? Why I’m—let me see. I’m now—or was, seventeen last January.”

“ So old.—Indeed! And not married yet. Are you not afraid of dying an old maid?”

“ Why bro—Peter!”

“ But, to be serious, young ladies,” resumed the old man, his manner entirely changing—“ for all of you are quite young, I perceive—this nonsense about coming out and getting married is not just the thing to fill the heads of such girls as you are. I’m a plain old man, and my age gives me the right to speak plainly. So you must not be offended at what I am going to say.”

“ But indeed, indeed, brother Peter, it is out place for you to bring forward your old-fashioned opinions here,” Mrs. Howard said, interrupting him.

“ Do spare us a lecture now, Uncle Peter, if you please,” added Cecilia, in an imploring tone.

“ You needn’t flutter like a struck chicken, ‘Celia. I sha’n’t say any thing but the truth. And that I am going to say, for I don’t know that I shall ever have a chance at all these young lady friends of yours again, or rather, misses, as I call them. Now, it’s my opinion, young ladies, and my opinion in these matters is worth something I take it, that you are no more fit, as you are, to make wives for honest, sensible men—and to get married I suppose, is about all you are looking forward to—than green apples are to make good cider.”

This produced quite a sensation, and sundry deprecating ejaculations from Mrs. Howard and Cecilia. But the old man had mounted a hobby, and was not to be thrown off.

“ Can any of you make a shirt on a pinch?” he went on. “ No, of course not. That would be vulgar. Or a loaf of bread? O no. Nor cook a dinner, nor even make a gruel for your sick husbands. What can you do then? What qualifications have you for the station of wives to which you all so eagerly aspire? Answer me that?” Here Uncle Peter began to warm. The hobby was in full gallop. “ O yes! I remember now. You can paint a flower and draw an old ruined castle. You can dance and waltz—talk French and Italian—screech, not sing, a few foreign airs in a foreign tongue, and play fashionable music. Rare accomplishments indeed! I really wonder that you have not been caught up by the men, and married long ago. No doubt you have each had a dozen or so offers already. And I shall not be at all surprised to hear that the responsibility of two or three duels rests upon each of your heads.”

Here Uncle Peter arose from his chair, and commenced walking backwards and forwards, with a quick, nervous step, talking all the while rapidly and almost incoherently. His words and manner, however, had not offended a single one of the visitors, who knew the old man a great deal better than he knew them, for

he had been, ever since their recollection, an occasional visitor at their father's houses—and had not changed in appearance during all that time, while they had sprung up and grown entirely out of his recollection. Dignified as they were—their dignity was nearly all an assumed exterior, for they were gay girls at heart—they had a girlish love of fun, and a girlish perception of the ridiculous, and were therefore far more amused than offended at Uncle Peter's freedom and fervor, though by no means disposed to profit by the lecture he read them. But Mrs. Howard and Cecilia were dreadfully mortified, and talked so plainly to Uncle Peter after the visitors had retired, that the old gentleman felt himself really offended. And well he might, for Mrs. Howard told him, very distinctly, that if he could not feel himself constrained to use a little more decorum in her house, especially when visitors were present, she would much rather he would stay away; and Cecilia's manner expressed the same thing.

It was nearly two months before he again went to the house, and when he did resume his visits, his manner was reserved, and his stay brief. The fact was, the old man had resolved not to cross the threshold of his sister's house for a year. But his affection for Cecilia was strong, creating so earnest a desire to see her, that he could not stay away. This reserved intercourse was kept up until towards fall, when Uncle Peter felt himself again compelled to speak out in his usual plain style. Cecilia had sprung up, during the year, into a fine, tall, graceful woman, in appearance. Her figure was perfect, and her face intelligent and beautiful. The old man could not but feel proud of his niece as he looked upon her—but his pride was softened by a deeper and purer love than was felt even by her mother, whose false views of society had polluted the well-springs of parental affection. Her pride was of her daughter's person, and for the sake of the opinions and admiration of others—and was, moreover, tinctured by the vain desire that Cecilia should outshine all other young ladies who moved in their circle. In his eyes, she was far more beautiful in face, and graceful in form and figure, than any young ladies he saw, and this made him naturally feel proud of her. But far above this did he set the genuine innocence and pure affections which he knew dwelt in her heart, but which, alas! though not destroyed, had become obscured by a false and dangerous system of education, under the care of a weak-minded, injudicious mother. It was for these that he loved her, as he had never loved any one before.

Immersed in business, with his mind all absorbed in its details, Mr. Howard had given little or no thought to Cecilia's education. She was a daughter, and of course, (so he quieted the momentary concern for his child that would sometimes arise in his mind,) her mother understood best how she ought to be educated. Whatever Mrs. Howard suggested was, therefore, immediately acquiesced in, and all the bills paid on presentation, as a matter of

course. But when it was proposed to send Cecilia away from home to a distant boarding-school, to be absent for months at a time, Mr. Howard demurred. He was too fond of his daughter to be willing thus to have her separated from him, and for such very long periods. To his objections, however, his wife did not listen, for a moment, but met them all with the declaration that it would be cruel and unjust to their daughter to deprive her, from mere selfish considerations, of the advantage of such an institution as that under the superintendence of Mrs. Finish, to which there was not another in the country in any way comparable, and of course, he had to give way,—for, not having given the subject of education any thought at all, he was not prepared to gainsay or controvert his wife's position. Like too many others, he suffered himself to make the acquirement of wealth an end, and business simply the means to that end. Of course, business was made to supersede every thing else. All day long his mind was absorbed in the details of a large establishment, and too frequently the leading thought during the evening was in relation to some scheme of profit. As a natural result, there was no room for a calm and philosophical consideration of the best means for educating the mind that had been entrusted to his care. Leaving all to a weak and vain woman, whose station in society had turned her head, as Uncle Peter used frequently to tell her in plain terms, no wonder that Cecilia sprung into premature womanhood, with obscure and false views of the world, and the position which she was about to assume.

Up to this time, Uncle Peter had labored hard, for the sake of his niece, to correct his sister's erroneous ideas; and had frequently tried to arouse in the mind of Mr. Howard a just concern for his daughter, but in vain; and he now saw Cecilia about to take that plunge into the giddy whirlpool of fashion and folly, which he had so long foreseen, and so long dreaded. Once more he felt constrained to speak out strongly and plainly, in the feeble hope that better counsel might prevail with the parents. Accordingly, he dropped in at Mr. Howard's one evening in October, and found the father and mother alone.

“Where's 'Celia?” he asked, after the passage of some ten or fifteen minutes, during which time she had not made her appearance.

“She is spending the evening out, somewhere,” Mrs. Howard said, in a tone of indifference.

“Somewhere!” returned Uncle Peter, with a strong expression of surprise. “And do you not know, really, where she is?”

“No, not exactly. She went out with Clementine Garland, and said that she didn't think she should be home until after tea, as they were going to make some calls a good way up town.”

“Humph!” ejaculated the old man, and then followed a silence of some moments. This was interrupted by Mrs. Howard, whom

his remark had chafed into ill-humor. She said, with much warmth—

“I don’t see, Peter, why you should make yourself so officious about Cecilia. It is very strange if her father and I cannot take proper care of her! You seem to talk and act as if you thought we hadn’t natural affection for our child!”

“Come, come, Hannah! Don’t give way so,” Mr. Howard interposed, in a soothing tone. “Your brother, of course, means well.”

“Of course I do. And well she knows it.”

“He may mean well,” Mrs. Howard replied, still with warmth—“but his interference in regard to Cecilia has always been out of place, unreasonable, and uncalled for, and I do not see that I am at all bound to put up with it eternally. It is very unlikely that I, as her mother, should not have just as tender a regard for her welfare as he possesses.”

“There is one thing very certain,” Uncle Peter responded, in a calm tone of voice—“which is this. My regard is so strong, that I would no more have permitted her at her present tender age, beautiful and attractive as she is, to be away from home, in a city like this, unattended by any of the family—and worse than all, remain in passive, indifferent ignorance of the company or place in which she may be—than I would put poison into her food!”

“I hardly think it right myself, now I reflect upon it,” Mr. Howard said.

“Right? No! It is a piece of blind, unnatural folly! if I must speak plainly. Is it to be supposed that one like Cecilia will not at once attract to her side young men who look at beauty and wealth as the only accomplishments desirable in a wife? How do you know, but that at this very moment, some specious, unprincipled fellow, who has already marked her for his prize, is whispering his honied, deceitful flatteries in her ear, and so winning her young and guileless heart to himself, that no power of yours can hereafter break the spell? Are you prepared thus to sacrifice her? Surely not! Then let me conjure you to guard her more carefully! Consider her in the light of a precious jewel, of which you may be robbed in a careless moment. Have you never seen unhappy marriages? Have you never known an instance where a young, innocent, undiscriminating maiden has pledged her love to one all unworthy of it—and worse, remained true to that pledge until her heart was broken? I am serious about this matter, and therefore I speak seriously.”

“But you exaggerate the danger, Peter,” urged Mrs. Howard. “May not all I said take place in the possible course of events?”

“Yes—such things might happen—but it is not very likely that they will in the case of Cecilia.”

"Still, there is danger," Mr. Howard remarked, "as your brother justly says—and I am convinced, with him, that the danger is of a kind that we should not treat indifferently."

"Indeed it is not, Mr. Howard! For my part, I feel that Cecilia is in peculiar danger. Enough will encompass her during the coming season, guard her as you may. Do not, then, invite more perils, and of a still more dangerous and insidious kind."

"What do you mean by dangerous in the approaching season?" asked Mr. Howard.

"I mean the dangers attendant on 'bringing Cecilia out,' as Hannah calls it."

"But she must be introduced into society, you know," urged Mr. Howard.

Of course she must. We were made for society. But why endeavor to make a sensation on introducing her? Why push her forward, into a position where her young head must inevitably be turned?—a position always of the most imminent danger? How much better would it be for you to introduce her quietly and unobtrusively. To go with her, and watch over her with careful solicitude, and to see that she mingled but little in the excitement of fashionable life, until, by observation and reflection, her judgment had matured. She is yet but a child, with her rational mind undeveloped. She knows little beyond what she has learned, and cannot reason to just conclusions upon any thing she sees around her. Is she fit, then, to be thrust forward into the front rank in social intercourse? To be the star of brilliant assemblages? No! And to place her there, let me tell you plainly, would be an act of madness!"

"I am sure I do not see the matter at all in the light that you do," Mrs. Howard replied. "As to Cecilia's being a mere ignorant child, that is all nonsense. She is a woman, and fit to take her place among women. What would you have us do? Coop her up for two or three years?"

"Yes, coop her up, according to your idea of the term. It will be plenty time enough for her to take her place in society, as a woman, in two or three years. In the mean'time, it is your duty to introduce her carefully and gradually, and to assist her to a right discrimination between its true and its false elements."

"Two or three years! You certainly do not know what you are talking about!"

"Well, perhaps not!" Uncle Peter said in a tone half ironical and half desponding. "I have at least said my say, and now you both know my opinion of the matter. If shipwreck be made of the poor girl's happiness, which I sadly fear will be the case, I shall have at least cleared my skirts of sin in the matter—although that will not assuage the pangs such an event will give me."

And so saying, Uncle Peter arose, took his hat and cane, and

bidding them good evening, left Mr. and Mrs. Howard to the reflections his remarks had awakened.

CHAPTER III.

Cecilia's introduction into society—Engagement—Marriage at eighteen—Husband as much a child as herself—False notions coming out into action—The young mother refuses to nurse her own child, that being considered ungenteel—Uncle Peter's views on the subject—A dangerous friend.

UNMOVED by anything which Uncle Peter could say, Mrs. Howard persisted in her determination to bring out Cecilia during the coming season.

"If you will do it, Hannah," the old man urged, finding that all his arguments, meant to prevent that act, fell upon her ear powerless, "let me beg of you to bring her forward gradually. Do not present her with a flourish of trumpets. Rather keep her in the back ground, until her head becomes steady, and her sight clear."

"Really, Peter," Mrs. Howard replied, "I do not see any reason why you should concern yourself so much about 'Celia. It's very strange if I don't know what is best for my own child! And as to bringing her forward gradually, as you call it, that would be an egregious folly. There wouldn't be the slightest sensation produced; and all depends upon that!"

"All what, Hannah?"

"Why, all—all—all—the—"

"Hannah!" And her brother looked at her steadily for a few moments, with a fixed, stern look. This put Mrs. Howard out of patience, and she replied with some acrimony.

"Peter, I am getting right down tired of this constant, unreasonable, and foolish interference of yours in regard to Cecilia. There is no sense in it! What do you know, pray, about what is best for a young lady situated like Cecilia? Why, just nothing at all. Such old fashioned notions as yours might do well enough fifty years ago. But they are not the thing now, and any one who should attempt to act them out, would become a general laughing stock. Come out gradually! Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"Producing a sensation! A young thing—a mere child, not seventeen—producing a sensation! Who ever heard of such a thing?" retorted the old man in a tone of bitter sarcasm. "And why all this desire to produce a sensation? Tell me that, will you? Oh! Ah! Yes! Now I see! The child is to be mar-

ried!—true! It's all a scheme to get a husband. To catch some silly fop, and to tie him to the girl's apron-strings!"

"It's no use for you to talk," Mrs. Howard replied, in a firm, but offended tone. "I know exactly what is right to be done, and I am going to do it, in spite of what you or any one else may say. I presume that I love my own child, and have a natural pride in her. Therefore, I am not going to let her be eclipsed by any one, if I can help it. On that point, my mind is made up. You sneer at her as a mere child. But, let me tell you, that the world will not so esteem her."

"And therein lies the danger I fear, Hannah," her brother said, in a gentler and more serious tone. "She will be looked upon as a woman, and treated as a woman; and, moreover, placed in circumstances, where a woman's judgment and a woman's discrimination will be called for. And are you not conscious that she does not possess either of them?"

"No, indeed! I am not conscious of any such deficiency in judgment and discrimination as you allege. I presume to know Cecilia as well, and even better than any one else, and this knowledge satisfies me fully of her ability to act a proper part in any society."

"Suppose any one makes her an offer of marriage?"

"Well, what then?"

"Exactly! What then?"

"Of course she will refer to her parents; and abide by their judgment in the matter."

"As the majority of young ladies do—ha?"

"If other girls have been self-willed, and imprudent in these matters, that is no reason why Cecilia should follow their example. She is very different, let me tell you, from the general run of young ladies?"

"Different, and yet, in many respects, too much like them," Uncle Peter said, half in reply, and half in soliloquy. And then the old man sunk into a reverie, at the conclusion of which Mrs. Howard managed to prevent a renewal of the unpleasant subject.

Time passed on, and the process of "coming out," was gone through, notwithstanding the open remonstrances and covert sarcasms of Uncle Peter. Miss Cecilia Howard, young and handsome, and "worth a plum," into the bargain, was received, of course, with marked consideration. A dozen handsome, intelligent, and accomplished young gentlemen, stood ready to give her a warm welcome. No wonder, then, that the brain of the young debutante was nearly turned. No wonder that her natural powers of discrimination, and the faculty of reading character, were almost altogether obscured, leaving her with no guide but her own love of admiration, and the susceptibilities of an innocent, unsuspecting heart. As might very naturally have been expected, at

the age of seventeen she was under engagement of marriage. And, notwithstanding moral philosophy had been one of the branches of her finished education, her choice was influenced by no moral considerations. She was wooed and won by a very handsome and very fashionable young man, whose family was of the true stamp of modern gentility. Of such a thing as moral worth she had no conception, for her own rational powers had scarcely begun to develope themselves. She was yet a child, but in the place of a woman, and scarcely more fit to act truly the part of a woman, than a child—for she could only be governed by external considerations, and by the influence of others, instead of by an internal conviction and perception, from reason, that her actions were right.

Fortunately, however, it so happened that Theodore Merlin, the young man by whom she had been wooed and won, though nearly as ignorant as herself in regard to true principles of action, rationally seen, had been kept through the watchful solicitude of a mother who knew something of the evils that beset young men when first entering the world, from moral contamination. There had been no insemination of evil principles in his mind. The ground was just broken, and ready for seed.

At eighteen, Cecilia became the happy Mrs. Merlin. As her husband was as much of a child as herself, it was thought advisable to overrule their strong desire to have an establishment of their own. This was done after much effort, and the young couple consented to spend the first year of their new existence in the family of Mr. and Mrs. Howard, the father and mother of Cecilia.

This year was passed by the young bride in a giddy round of pleasure. Books were no more resorted to, except as the means of filling up an idle hour. Having *completed her education* at school it would not only have been irksome, but a real waste of time, she felt, to look again into books of principles or facts. Of course, Cecilia had no affection for, or appreciation of, knowledge as the means to a real useful end. It was fashionable for young ladies to be well educated and accomplished, and that was the impulse under which she had pressed forward at school, and imbibed a knowledge of the various branches which were there taught.

At the end of the first year which passed after their marriage, the young couple set up for themselves. Mr. Merlin had commenced business as a merchant, and now they felt themselves of no little importance in society. Furnished out with a cook, a chambermaid, and a waiter, or man-servant, Mrs. Merlin found house-keeping a very pleasant kind of an affair. She had nothing to do but to dress, visit, and receive company. No household cares, or interfering duties, marred the pleasant round of her fashionable recreations.

During all this time, it must not be supposed that Uncle Peter remained a silent witness of passing events in the life of his niece, for whom his affection remained undiminished. He was a kind of thorn in the side of Mrs. Howard and Cecilia, censuring, opposing, or ridiculing every folly, imprudence, or false notion with most annoying pertinacity. But there was one thing which he did not oppose, but rather encouraged, and that was the desire of the young folks to set up housekeeping for themselves. Not that he supposed Cecilia at all fitted for the duties which would naturally devolve upon her, or that she would, at first, make any effort to perform those duties. But he was anxious to have her removed from her mother's influence, and placed in circumstances where she would be required, at times, to act for herself. In her own house, he could the oftener find her alone, and while alone, that is, away from her mother, he knew that he could much more easily make her comprehend some things, necessary to be learned.

To his advocacy of Mr. and Mrs. Merlin's desire to set up for themselves, were they indebted for the handsome outfit they received at the end of the first year of their marriage. For this they both felt very grateful to him, and much inclined to be charitable to, and to bear with commendable patience, his frequent opposition to their manners and habits of life, and his ridicule of their deference to prevailing modes in which was no principle of moral life.

During the second year of their marriage, a sweet babe came to bless their household with a blessing of innocence and delight. For this, no heart, not even the mother's, was more thankful than that of Uncle Peter.

"Now," said the old man to himself, as he sat smiling in tears, upon learning the news, and that Cecilia was safely through the pains and perils of child-birth—"Now there is hope for my dear girl; for, surely, in loving and ministering to her own sweet babe, will the young mother's heart find pleasures far more attractive—delights far more exquisite—than those offered by the hollow forms and courtesies of fashionable life. Now she will be won away from these."

But, Uncle Peter was mistaken—sadly mistaken. On his first visit, two days after the birth of her child, he found that a wet-nurse had been engaged, and saw, the first time his eye rested upon it, the helpless innocent which had been sent to bless his niece, laid upon the bosom of a stranger!

This was a painful shock to the old man's feelings. Owing to the weak condition of Cecilia, he could not remonstrate with her upon so unnatural an act, much as he desired to do so. Still, he could not help saying, as he stooped down to kiss her, on rising to go away,

"Cecilia, take that babe to your own bosom. It will be a thousand times dearer to you."

"My constitution would not bear it"—Cecilia replied, in a feeble voice—but the feebleness was mainly an affectation.

Uncle Peter knew that it was not the time to urge the matter, and so he deferred what he strongly desired to say, for some three or four weeks, when he thought that she could more easily bear a little excitement of mind.

For the purpose of having some plain talk, he called in, one morning, about the end of that time. He had visited Cecilia the day before, as he had done regularly every day, since the birth of her babe. But since his last visit, there had been a change. He found her sitting alone in her chamber, with every thing arranged in the most perfect order, and no indication whatever to be seen that she was now a mother. The old man looked around in surprise for a moment or two, and then asked for little Cecilia.

"Nurse and the babe have been removed to their own apartment," was the quiet, dignified reply of Mrs. Merlin.

"To their own apartment!" exclaimed Uncle Peter, in a tone of surprise. "And pray, madam, where is that?"

"In the nursery, to be sure!" Cecilia replied. "You didn't suppose, surely, that I was going to keep them in my own chamber?"

"Removed to the nursery, and only four weeks old!" Uncle Peter said, in a low voice of surprise and displeasure. "Cecilia, you are more unnatural than the dumb animals. They always nurse and take care of their own young."

"It's a shame for you to talk to me in that way, Uncle Peter!" Cecilia replied in an offended tone. "Do you take me for a cow?"

"I would have you imitate at least the natural feelings of a cow in regard to your own offspring," the old man said—"Like her, nature has supplied you with the means of nourishing your own child, but there the parallel ceases. She hearkens to the call of nature, and obeys its prompting impulses. But you do not. More unnatural are you than the animal you have named. And not only more unnatural than that harmless creature, but more unnatural than even the fierce lioness, whose love for her young rebukes your heartless abandonment of yours. Pardon my plainness of speech. I must speak what I think."

This had the effect of bringing forth a gush of tears. But that argument weighed but little with Uncle Peter, whose pure and unselfish love for his niece prompted him to speak out the truth with unmistakeable plainness. As soon as that demonstration had subsided, he said, in a soothing, persuasive tone,

"Do think better of it, Cecilia, and take that dear little babe to your bosom before it is too late—before the fountain which nature has opened there be made utterly dry. Do not, let me beg of you, suffer her first, best, innocent affections to entwine themselves around any one but her own mother."

"But think of my health, Uncle?"

"How do you know it will injure your health?"

"Why every body says that it will."

"Whom do you mean by every body?"

"Why all the ladies that I know. There is Mrs. Melrose, who says that she never thinks of nursing one of her children now. She did try it at first, but had to give it up."

"Mrs. Melrose! And can it be possible, Cecilia, that such a woman as Mrs. Melrose can influence you in a thing like this,—a mere butterfly, who sports and flutters and finds existence in the sunshine of fashionable life. A woman who has smothered every impulse of nature. Shame on you for harkening a moment to the evil suggestions of one like her!"

"I declare, Uncle Peter, it is too bad, the way you talk to me about myself and my intimate friends!" responded Cecilia, warmly. "You used to love me"—her voice softening—"and praise me, and call me your dear little 'Celia. But now, I can do nothing to please you!"

A tear fell upon the young mother's hand, as she ceased speaking. Uncle Peter waited a moment, and then said,

"It is because I love you, Cecilia, that I talk to you so plainly. If I cared nothing for you, I should not, probably, come near you, or make the slightest effort to save you from follies and wrong habits of life, that must, inevitably, end in your permanent unhappiness. That Holy Book, whose precepts are living and immutable truths, declares "*The way of transgressors is hard.*" You are now transgressing a law of nature; and it is because I wish to save you from the penalty which must, certainly, follow such a transgression, that I now talk to you with a degree of plainness that has wounded your feelings."

Cecilia looked at her Uncle in silent surprise: and he continued—

"It is a law of nature that the mother shall nourish her own offspring. Beware how you violate that law! For, 'The way of the transgressor is hard.'"

"But it is not now considered genteel for a lady to nurse her children," urged Cecilia, not at all feeling the force of her Uncle's remark.

"Not genteel for a mother to nurse her own babe!" exclaimed the old man, in surprise. "Bless me! To what are we coming? But, surely, you cannot be in earnest!"

"Indeed and I am! Things are not now as they were when you were young. You must remember that society is advancing, and that all improvements necessarily bring changes in the domestic, as well as in other relations in life. Mrs. Melrose says that—"

"Don't talk to me about Mrs. Melrose, if you please!" interrupted Uncle Peter, in a voice that seemed harsh and angry to his niece. "She is a heartless—nay, a wicked woman!"

"Wicked? How can you say so? I know her well, and know that she is kind, and good, and gentle."

"Yes, very kind, and good, and gentle, to fill the head of a young thing like you with the unnatural and wicked idea, that it is wrong to nourish your own babe at your own bosom. Shame on her! I say."

"But I am sure, Uncle, that I can't see any difference to little Cecilia whether nurse or I take the care of her. She will be equally well attended—or rather, I should say, better attended, as it is now, than if I were to attempt the task of ministering to her myself."

Rough, and egoistic, and unpolished as Uncle Peter seemed, at times, the reader has already discovered that he possessed a discriminating mind, with the power of expressing clearly, and in good language, sound and healthy moral principles.

"Are you willing to see the difference to your babe?" he asked, as soon as Cecilia had made the last remark.

"Of course I am," was the reply.

"Then I will try to present it. Why, in the first place, let me ask you, has your babe been permitted to be born into this world?"

"To grow up and be happy, I suppose."

"And for that alone?"

"I don't know for what else, particularly."

"Then I will try to show you, if I can, for what other reason your babe was born."

"Well, I should like to hear."

"She has been born to fill some particular place in the great social body, to the end that she may minister to the happiness of others."

"And be miserable herself in doing so."

"No, my child. But to be, in filling her true place, and in the active performance of uses to others in that place, happy beyond the highest conception of those who seek only, and selfishly, their own delight."

"I must confess that I do not understand you, Uncle," was Cecilia's cold reply.

For a few moments, Uncle Peter sat silent, and then resumed—

"At some future day, I trust, I shall be able to make you comprehend, fully, what I have said, and much more that I wished to say. At present I must try to influence you in regard to your babe by what you can understand. Your child, you think, was born to be happy."

"Certainly I do."

"And so it was. Happy, I think, in bestowing good to others, you think, in receiving it from others. But no matter. Your child was born to be happy, and as you are its mother, you are bound to secure, by all means, as far as in your power lies, your child's future happiness. Do you not think so?"

"Certainly I do."

"And do you not think that you can secure this happiness for your offspring much more certainly by ministering, yourself, to all its wants, from the hour of its birth?"

"No, I do not. And I will tell you why. As Mrs. Melrose says, and justly—"

"Don't speak of that woman to me, Cecilia. I should suspect the truth to be a mere perversion of it, were I to hear it uttered by her lips."

"Well, then, as I say,—My babe is now perfectly unconscious of external things. It needs only to be attended to in the kindest and gentlest manner, and this, a careful and experienced nurse can do much better than myself."

"I doubt it, Cecilia."

"But it is reasonable, Uncle. She has nursed many children—I none."

"Which do you suppose would fight best for his country—The hired soldier, who had nothing at stake: or the citizen who felt his country's honor and rights insulted while his breast warmed into patriotic enthusiasm, and under such impulses went deliberately into the battle field?"

"The latter, of course."

"And which, do you think, would best cherish a helpless infant—The mother who had borne it, and whose heart yearned over it with a mother's peculiar affection:—or the hireling nurse, whose only reason for assuming the maternal office, was an expectation of the wages of her service? Answer this question, Cecilia, to your own heart!"

"But Uncle, although this sounds very imposing, yet it seems to me fallacious. A babe, as I said before, needs only to be carefully and tenderly nursed. What more could I do for it?"

"Is your babe a mere animal? Are there not the germs of a budding intellect concealed in the principle of life, that now seems little more than mere animal life? Are there not affections there, which will be called into activity almost simultaneously with its bodily existence—affections that may be trained to good, or warped to evil? Think of this, Cecilia, and tremble lest, even now, a hand less careful than your own, and all unskilled by the science of a mother's love, may be giving to the first outreaching tendrils of affection a bias that no after culture can eradicate,—a bias that will make your child for ever unhappy. Cecilia, the position of a mother—your position—is one of fearful responsibility. And woe be to her who shrinks from that responsibility! She will curse her children, and that curse will be revisited upon her own head."

Uncle Peter spoke with warmth, and Cecilia felt, in a degree, the truth and power of what he said. Before she had time to reply, Mrs. Melrose was announced, and entered her room a few moments afterwards.

"My dear Cecilia! How glad I am to see you so well!" exclaimed that personage, throwing her arms around Cecilia, and kissing her with a great show of affection.

As she did this, Uncle Peter arose, and with a formal bow to both his niece and her visitor turned towards the door.

"O don't go yet, Uncle," cried Cecilia, affecting to desire longer his company, than which nothing, just at that moment, would have been more annoying.

"Say Peter!" rejoined the old man, who felt her insincerity, turning upon her as he spoke a look peculiar to himself, in which was blended something of contempt and anger.

"Uncle Peter, then!"

"Good morning!" And in the next moment he shut the door hard after him.

"What a queer old fellow that Uncle of yours is!" Mrs. Melrose said, laughing out so loud, that Cecilia was alarmed lest her Uncle should hear the sound of her voice.

"Queer enough," replied Mrs. Merlin. "The fact is, he annoys me almost to death of late. His eccentric ways, and peculiar modes of thought and speech, are bad enough, especially when company is present; but, besides them, I have to bear with his constant interference in things that don't concern him at all. As for instance, he has just been reading me a grave lecture because I have taken a nurse for my babe."

"Good gracious! And pray, what does he want you to do?"

"To nurse it myself, of course."

"I hope you had spirit enough to tell him just to mind his own business."

"I couldn't tell him that, of course, because he is my mother's brother, and seems to have an affection for me."

"Though a singular way of showing it."

"Yes, rather singular, I often think myself."

"Nurse your own child! Too bad, upon my word!"

"Ain't it?"

"I don't know one lady, that may be truly called a lady," pursued Mrs. Melrose, "who pretends to be tied down to her children. Mothers used to make slaves of themselves—but genteel people don't do so now. The world is growing wiser in these matters. What is the use, I wonder, of a mother's tying herself down, when there are plenty of females to be had, whose business it is to nurse children, and who are very willing to undertake the care of them? For my part, I never nursed but one of my children, and that was enough for me. As soon as they are born, now, I turn them over to a good nurse, and go and enjoy myself in society as usual. That is the true way—and the way fashionable ladies now do."

"And the way I intend doing," replied Cecilia, notwithstanding the strong arguments Uncle Peter had used in the hope of driving her from so unnatural a resolution.

CHAPTER IV.

Uncle Peter's opinion of Mrs. Melrose—A juvenile friend referred to, whose acquaintance had been cut—Uncle Peter and Cecilia both offended—Mrs. Melrose's opinion of Uncle Peter, accompanied with some advice to Cecilia—The old man refuses Cecilia's overtures for a reconciliation.

"You look upon Mrs. Melrose as a very particular friend, I presume," Uncle Peter remarked to Cecilia, a few days after his plain talk about her babe.

"Indeed I do, Uncle, one of my most particular friends."

"And I look upon her as your worst enemy," was the old man's emphatic reply.

"How can you say that?" Cecilia rejoined, in a half offended tone. "I am sure she is a lady, in every sense of the word."

"As to the lady part," Uncle Peter retorted, somewhat contemptuously, "I must beg leave to differ a little. So far from having any claims to that title, she doesn't know even the meaning of the word. A lady, indeed! Let me tell you, child, that a lady is quite another kind of character. I have seen and known a few ladies in my time, but they were about as much like Mrs. Melrose in mind and manners, as she is like a Hottentot. If it is because you have an idea that she is a lady, that you make an intimate friend of her, give her the go by, as we vulgar people say, forthwith, for I can assure you that she never was, is not now, and never can be a lady, or even the smallest beginning of one."

"It is unkind in you, Uncle Peter, to talk to me in such a way about those you know to be my most intimate friends. Indeed, it seems only necessary for me to have a preference for any one, for you to dislike her. This was not the case a few years ago. But I believe you have had a prejudice against me, ever since I went away to boarding-school."

The old man heard Cecilia out patiently, and then said—

"I never disliked Flora Henry."

"Flora Henry!" ejaculated Cecilia, the color mounting to her cheek.

"Yes, Flora Henry. I never disliked her, and yet you were intimate friends."

"As mere girls, we were. Flora, you know, was only a juvenile acquaintance, set aside, as such usually are, long ago."

"Was she not, as a girl, innocent, pure-minded, and companionable?"

"She was a very good sort of a person, I believe, and I liked her very much when we were girls together."

“Then, why was she set aside?”

“Because I wished to choose my companions from among my equals.”

“Equals in what?”

“Equals in station—or rank—or standing in society—which-ever you wish to call it.”

“Rank and station! Rank nonsense! Among all your companions, if I have seen a fair sample of them, there is not one who will compare with Flora Henry, as to intelligence, moral worth, and all that constitutes the true lady. I know her well, and am proud to number her among my friends, even though you have cut her acquaintance. And as to your Mrs. Melrose, she will compare with Flora about as well as a piece of isinglass will with a diamond. That’s my opinion fairly stated.”

“But Flora’s father is only a clerk in a bank, on a limited salary.”

“And your father is only a dealer in foreign wares. Pray, what is the difference that makes the superiority?”

“My father is rich—and we move in a very different circle from what her family does.”

“But I can remember when your father was not a stiver better off than Mr. Henry now is;—nor, indeed, so well. I wonder if he was a gentleman then, and your mother a lady?”

“But I don’t see, Uncle Peter, that allusions to what my father was when he started in life, have any thing to do with the matter. If he has gained a higher position in society by his own energy, why seek to drag both himself and family down from it, and compel them to associate with vulgar people?”

“Then it is money that makes you all so much better than you were?”

“It is my father’s wealth, certainly, that has given us a place in the highest circles.”

“Suppose, by some sudden reverses in business, such as too frequently occur, your father were to lose his wealth—what then?”

“I do not suppose that any such thing is going to take place. My father is rich.”

“Very many rich people, richer by far than your father, have been brought down to poverty. It may be your case. Who, then, will be your associates?”

“If such a circumstance were to take place, though I have no fear of it, I do not believe that I have a single intimate friend who would reeude from me.”

“Not even Mrs. Melrose?”

“No indeed! She, least of all.”

“She, first of all, I am ready to affirm.”

“Why have you such a prejudice against Mrs. Melrose?” Cecilia asked, with a half offended, half curious air.

“Because I know her to be a selfish, heartless woman; one, too, who has no ideas of right and wrong, except conventional ones. For you I don’t believe she has any more sincere regard than she has for the veriest stranger. You are a fashionable acquaintance, with whom she can idle away her time, and gratify her love of gossip and tittle-tattle. I know her, and all her family from beginning to end, and know just what any profession of regard from her is worth.”

“It’s all prejudice, Uncle.”

“Don’t believe a word of it, child. I never hold mere idle prejudices against any one.”

“But I am sure you do against Mrs. Melrose, who is a general favorite.”

“Wasn’t it through her influence that little Cecilia lost her place upon her mother’s bosom?”

“Uncle Peter!”

“I ask a simple question. Cannot you give me a true answer?”

“I don’t wish to talk about that, Uncle.”

“But I do; and mean to talk about it whenever I come to see you.”

“Then I wish you would never ——”

Cecilia stopped suddenly, colored deeply, and looked confused—

“Come to see me! That finishes what you were saying,” Uncle Peter said, knitting his brow, and compressing his lips tightly, as he arose from his chair.

“I didn’t say any such thing, Uncle.”

“But you thought so, and that is all the same to me.” As he said this, the old man took his hat and cane, and began moving towards the door.

“Now don’t go, Uncle Peter! Let me beg of you not to go!” urged Cecilia, coming quickly to his side, and laying her hand upon his arm, while the tears were in her eyes.

For a moment, and only for a moment, did the old man pause; then he said with a firm voice—

“Two like Mrs. Melrose and myself cannot hold a place in the same regard—that is clear. The plain, sincere, affectionate old man, has been set aside for the heartless flatterer, whose subtle poison has already infected a once innocent bosom with an almost incurable malady. No, Cecilia, one heart cannot hold us both. You have said the word, and I go!”

Uncle Peter turned quickly away, and closed the door after him with a heavy jar. Cecilia yet stood, pained and confounded at the effect of her half spoken thought, when the door partly reopened, and Uncle Peter stood in the narrow aperture. His face wore an aspect of sterner severity than it had exhibited a few moments before.

“Your dear, cast off babe, the forsaken offspring of an unnatural mother, I shall still call and see. It will need the watchful care of some one who can love it for its own sake. As for you, it matters not whether we ever meet again.”

The old man’s tones were even more cutting than his words. As soon as he had uttered this slowly and deliberately, he again withdrew.

Its effect upon Cecilia was painful in the extreme. With all his peculiarities and steady opposition, she was attached to her uncle. His affection for her in earlier days had been so constantly manifested, and in so many forms, that it could not be forgotten, or the tenderness which it had awakened in her bosom, obliterated. From the commencement of his opposition, as she began to emerge into an atmosphere of artificial life, she had not only felt annoyed, but had experienced a sensation of uneasiness, and want of full self-approbation, whenever she acted in a way, or expressed sentiments, that he did not approve. And yet she, at all times, endeavored to confirm herself in the idea that she was right and he wrong. What he had said about her babe, had in it so much that was rational, that argue with herself as she would in the effort to approve her own course, she was far from feeling easy in mind. His present bitter, and, as she felt, cruel and unfeeling remarks, coming upon this state, wounded her deeply. For nearly a minute after he had left her the second time, Cecilia stood, half stupefied, with the hope in her mind that he would not go away from the house under the influence of the feelings he had manifested. The loud jar of the street door awoke her from this dreamy, bewildered idea, when she sunk into a chair, and gave way to a gush of tears.

As this tumult of feeling began to subside, came a review of her conduct towards her child, which had so particularly offended Uncle Peter. It did not, she could not help confessing to herself, look right. But that, she argued, was a mere appearance. Little Cecilia was as well, nay, better cared for, than if one so young and inexperienced as she were to take charge of her. Still, so much impression had her uncle’s harsh words made upon her, that she could not feel right until she had sent for her babe from the nursery. Taking it in her arms, and letting its little head lie upon her bosom, while its innocent face was upturned to hers, and her own countenance mirrored in the clear depths of its azure eyes, she felt a sweet thrill of maternal delight all unknown before. For nearly an hour had she held her babe thus, unwearied, and feeling a new emotion of pleasure with each passing minute, when Mrs. Melrose, her very particular friend, called in, and in her familiar way, proceeded at once to Cecilia’s chamber.

We grieve to say, that Mrs. Merlin felt something like shame arising in her breast, at being detected by her fashionable friend in fondling her babe. The color heightened on her cheek, and

her eye looked slightly confused. Ringing instantly for the nurse, she transferred the charge of little Cecilia at once to her.

"Ah, my dear," began Mrs. Melrose, the moment she came in, shaking her head, and looking a little grave, "that will never do. You'll spoil both the nurse and your child. She will be trouble enough by-and-by. So take your comfort now while you can."

"I was only holding it for a few minutes, while nurse did something for me," Cecilia replied, blushing for the falsehood, in spite of herself.

"Take my advice, dear, and don't call upon your nurse for any service that will require her to resign the babe for a moment. If you want any thing done, direct your chambermaid to do it; or let her take charge of the babe, if it is any thing that you particularly wish the nurse to do. That is my way, and I have no trouble. But if you keep taking the babe every now and then, of your own accord, it will soon be expected of you; and then, if it does not happen to suit your ease or convenience to be troubled with a child when nurse wants to get rid of it, she will, ten chances to one, get pouty. I've seen too much of these things."

Mrs. Merlin did not reply to this; but it had its effect upon her. Not so decided, however, in its character, as it would have been if she had not seen Uncle Peter that morning.

"You look a little serious," was the remark of Mrs. Melrose, after they had chatted for about a quarter of an hour. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing in particular," Cecilia replied. But the thought of why she looked a little serious, caused her to look much more so.

"You really seem troubled, my dear. What does ail you?" Mrs. Melrose now said with some concern in her voice.

"Nothing, only that old Uncle of mine has been worrying me again."

"Too bad! too bad!" ejaculated the friend. "I wonder you tolerate him about you. If I were in your place, I would soon send him about his business."

"But he is my mother's brother, remember."

"What of that? If he were my own brother, and meddled in my affairs as he meddles in yours, I would snub him up in short order. You are a woman, and ought to know what is right to do in things that concern yourself. And you do know a thousand times better than such old cot-betties as he is, ever prying about, and putting their noses into things that don't concern them. Now, I'll venture to bet two to one, that it was the effect of something that he said this morning that made you go to baby-nursing. Wasn't it?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I may have been a little influenced by him."

"So I thought. Now do, Cecilia, maintain your own rights

and your own independence. Don't let that superannuated old fellow, with his notions fifty years behind the times, influence you a single iota. Be a woman in your own place, and fill your right position in social life. He would tie you down in the nursery, and never let you see outside of the house once in a month, except to go to church on Sunday, if he had his way. But don't, let me again beg of you, be influenced by him, in the slightest degree."

"That danger is pretty well passed now, I believe," Cecilia said, with something more cheerful in her voice. "I offended him deeply this morning."

"Indeed! I am truly glad to hear it. And do you think he will stay away?"

"I presume so. He is always set in his own determinations; and he says that he shall visit little Cecilia, but not me."

"Good riddance! That's all I have to say. But come, I want you to make a few calls with me."

Ever ready to answer such an invitation, Mrs. Merlin speedily attired herself, and the two very particular friends started out to pay a few visits of ceremony.

When Uncle Peter turned from the door of his niece, it was with feelings deeply wounded. Mrs. Melrose he knew to be a woman of neither true feelings, true perceptions of right, nor true principles. A woman, too, who had a strong love of dominion, evinced in her persevering efforts to bring others under the influence of her particular notions, to do which she usually left no stone unturned. The influence of such a woman upon his niece, young, ignorant of the world, and easily led by others, he dreaded exceedingly. Already he could detect sad evidences in Cecilia's opinions and acts, of the power she was exercising over her. In his own way, he had endeavored to counteract this evil influence, but saw, with pain, all his efforts prove unavailing. Cecilia was going with the tide.

It was nearly a month before the old man again met his niece, although he saw her babe, for whom his affection grew stronger and stronger, every two or three days. He managed always to call at a time when Mrs. Merlin was out. Notwithstanding Mrs. Melrose's frequent and disparaging allusions to Uncle Peter, Cecilia felt troubled with self-accusations whenever she thought of him. They had parted in anger. Notwithstanding his ultra, old-fashioned ideas, and annoying system of fault-finding, she could but give him the credit of meaning well. And more than that, she acknowledged him to be right in much that he stickled for, in the abstract, though wrong in opposing simple right to conventional customs. As week after week passed away, and she saw nothing of him, but heard of his having called frequently in her absence, she began to have a strong desire to see him again, and

to offer some apology for the offence she had given, even if he did not soften his tone toward her in the least.

One day, about a month after their angry contention and separation, on coming home from paying a round of visits earlier than usual, she went into the nursery to satisfy a yearning desire to see little Cecilia, who was growing finely, and beginning to hold up her head and take some notice. As she stepped lightly in, her eye rested upon Uncle Peter, who sat with his back towards the door, holding the babe in his arms and looking down intently into its little face. She paused only for a moment, and then went up to the old man, and placed her hand familiarly upon his shoulder, saying, as she did so—

“I am glad to see you, Uncle Peter.”

The old man started at the sound of her voice, and looked up with a stern expression on his face.

“Don’t look at me so angrily,” Cecilia said, her voice trembling, and her countenance changing. “I have forgiven you—cannot you forgive me?”

“I have nothing for which to ask forgiveness, and nothing to forgive in you. Better ask forgiveness of this sweet innocent,” was the uncompromising reply of the old man, made in a low tone, and after glancing towards the nurse to see if she were beyond the reach of his voice. Then rising up, he called to the latter, and resigned, after kissing it tenderly, her charge into her arms.

A cold and formal good morning followed this, and the old man turned and proceeded down stairs, on his way from the house. He had taken his hat from the rack in the hall, and was placing it upon his head, when his niece, who had, after a moment’s hesitation, followed after him, put her hand upon his arm and said—

“You must not go away, Uncle Peter, and leave me, feeling as you now do.”

There were tears in her eyes as she looked him steadily in the face.

She saw not the violent struggle that took place in the old man’s bosom between his strong affection for her and his displeasure at what he esteemed unnatural conduct towards her child. She saw only his stern countenance as he turned from her and left the house without a word.

CHAPTER V.

Trouble in the household economy—Cook goes off without any warning—Nurse has to go into the kitchen—Dinner spoiled on purpose—Mrs. Merlin, although her education had been finished some years before, is unable to remedy the deficiencies of the culinary department—Babe neglected, which is discovered by Uncle Peter, who takes care to express a full share of indignation—A brief change for the better.

CECILIA, or Mrs. Merlin, had been weeping for nearly an hour after Uncle Peter's departure, when the door of her room was opened by the chambermaid, who said—

“ Susan has gone away, ma'am.”

“ Gone away where ?” asked Mrs. Merlin, shading her face with her hand, so as to conceal the evidence of her unhappiness.

“ Left and gone to another place, ma'am.”

“ Very well, I will come down and see about it in a little while,” was the reply, made to get rid of the servant until she could compose her mind.

The chambermaid withdrew, and in about half an hour Mrs. Merlin went down into the kitchen, where she had not been before for a month, and then her visit was more by accident than design. She found the fire out, and the breakfast things unwashed and piled upon a table. No one was there. After calling several times for Melissa, the chambermaid, that individual slowly descended, and joined her mistress in the basement.

“ Where did Susan go, Melissa ?” asked Mrs. Merlin.

“ I don't know, ma'am. I came down here about an hour ago for something, and found things just as you see.”

“ How do you know then that she has gone away to another place ?”

“ O, because she has been saying all along that she meant to go when her month was up, and she asked Mr. Merlin for her wages this morning.”

“ What made her go away ?”

“ Indeed I don't know, ma'am. She wasn't satisfied about something.”

“ I'm sure I don't know what she could be dissatisfied about,” Mrs. Merlin said. And that was true enough,—for she didn't see her cook much oftener than once a week, took no kind interest in her or any of the domestics, and frequently grumbled at the table in the presence of Hiram, the waiter, because things were not cooked to please her. Of course Hiram took good care to

tell Susan with some little exaggerations of his own, all that was said about her deficiencies. She was a well-meaning woman, somewhat deficient in her knowledge of the branch of domestic economy in which she was endeavoring to do her best, and from her anxiety to please, exceedingly sensitive. Whenever Hiram repeated a complaint, with his own peculiar expression of voice and countenance, she would feel unhappy for hours afterwards. Finally, she determined to go away, and did so without saying a word to Mrs. Merlin, whose treatment of her appeared very unkind.

"She thought you wasn't pleased with her, I believe," Melissa replied to Mrs. Merlin's last remark.

"But how could she think that? I never said any thing to her in my life in the way of finding fault."

"I don't know, ma'am. Some people are very queer," was the chambermaid's vague reply.

"You will have to cook, Melissa, until we can get some one in Susan's place," Mrs. Merlin said, after thinking for a few moments.

"But I never cooked a meal's victuals in my life," was Melissa's prompt answer, tossing her head with a slight air of indignation at the idea of being reduced to the kitchen. "I don't know any thing about cooking."

Mrs. Merlin could not reply to this, that she must make the effort, and she would show her, for she knew nothing herself about culinary affairs, as they had ever been esteemed far beneath her.

"What, then, is to be done?" she asked, in a troubled voice.

"Indeed, ma'am, and it's more than I can tell. I never accept a place to do any thing but chamber-work."

"Go up, then, and take the baby, and send nurse down to me."

Melissa tripped away up to the nursery, and flinging open the door, said, as she entered—

"Here, Gray, give me the baby! Mrs. Merlin wants you down in the kitchen."

"In the kitchen! And pray what does she want with me in the kitchen?" asked Mrs. Gray, with a heavy contraction of her brow.

"To cook dinner, I suppose. Susan, you know, has cleared out, and she is in a precious quandary. She said I must cook until some one could be got in Susan's place! But I told her pretty quick that I didn't know any thing about cooking; that I always engaged to do chamber-work. It's a pretty how-do-you-do, that, whenever a cook gets the sulks and goes off, the chambermaid must be made a scullion of. But I'm not the one to stand it, no how."

"Cook dinner!" exclaimed the nurse, as soon as Melissa had breathed out her indignation.

"Yes, to cook dinner! That's what she wants with you."

"But I didn't come here to cook."

"Nor I either. And what is more, I'm not going to do it. That's settled and fixed! But you'd better run down quick. She's waiting for you."

Reluctantly did nurse transfer her charge to the arms of Melissa, and then descended, grumbling, to the basement.

"Susan has gone off, and I want you to get dinner for us to-day," Mrs. Merlin said, as soon as Mrs. Gray made her appearance.

"Who'll take care of the baby?" asked the nurse, in a sullen and reluctant tone.

"Melissa will have to take charge of her."

"But why can't she cook?"

"She says she knows nothing about cooking."

"It's easy enough to say any thing," grumbled the nurse. "She knows as much about cooking as I do."

Worried at the sudden departure of the cook and vexed at both chambermaid and nurse, Mrs. Merlin had it on her tongue to say, in a pettish tone,—

"Go up to the nursery, and I will get dinner myself!"

But the sudden recollection that she knew no more about the preparation of a meal than she did about alchymy, caused her to restrain the words. Although her education had been finished some years before, this was a matter of such little importance, that she had given no attention to it. Or, rather, the truth was, that culinary accomplishments, in the school where she had been finished off, were considered beneath the attention of a lady.

A feeling of indignation coming to her aid, in the emergency in which she found herself placed, caused her to reply to her nurse's last remark with a degree of earnestness and decision that had its due effect.

"That is neither here nor there, now. I want you to get dinner and supper to-day;—in fact, to cook until I can get some one in Susan's place. Will you do it or not?"

"Of course I will do it," half grumbled out the nurse. "But, then, it's not the place of a ——"

"That can't be helped now, and so it's no use to talk about it," Mrs. Merlin said, interrupting her, in a decided tone.

As the chamber-work was unfinished, she had to go to the nursery and take charge of little Cecilia, while Melissa went about the house and put things in order. It took her just twice as long as usual to get through, so that Mrs. Merlin was "tied down" to her babe until dinner time, when her husband, instead of finding her in the parlor, as usual, had to seek her in the nursery, where he was entertained with the story of her difficulties, perplexities, &c., for about half an hour, when the bell rang for dinner, and

Melissa came in to take charge of the babe, which she did with the air of one who wished her indignation at a gross imposition upon her rights to be seen.

Descending to the dining-room, the table was found "set" in its usual neat order, for that was Hiram's business. But the beef was burnt to a crisp. The Irish potatoes had been suffered to lie in the water after they were done, until thoroughly saturated, and the sweet potatoes were not over half cooked.

"Isn't it too bad to be annoyed in this way?" Mrs. Merlin said, when she found the dinner completely spoiled. "These creatures have not a spark of principle about them. Just to think that Susan, who has been allowed to do just as she pleased ever since she has been in the house, should have gone off without a word, and left me in such a predicament. Too bad! Too bad!" And thus she worried her husband with complaints, by way of dessert to a spoiled dinner, instead of having, in the absence of a regular cook, to whom the whole business of preparing the meal might have been safely trusted, gone into the kitchen occasionally to have made sure that every thing was going on right. But we forget,—that would have been of no account. Her education had been finished, without including the vulgar duties appertaining to the various branches of domestic economy.

"I declare, Gray, you have spoiled every thing!" exclaimed Melissa, as she met the nurse at table, after Mr. and Mrs. Merlin had retired, and attempted to eat the unpalatable food that had been prepared.

"I know that as well as you do," Gray replied, tossing her head. "They'll soon get tired of my cooking! I came to nurse."

"But for our own sakes you needn't have hatched up such a mess as this."

"I can stand it as long as they can. If every thing was just to their taste, there wouldn't be any hurry in getting a cook. I know what I'm about."

And so it seemed, truly, for during the three days the family was without a cook, the food came served up in the most abominable style, and always from a half hour to an hour past the usual time. To remedy this was beyond the power of the accomplished mistress of the family. To add to the discomforts of Mrs. Merlin's situation under the circumstances, her chambermaid managed to find enough to do about the house that had absolutely to be done to occupy nearly the whole of her time, so that the mother was compelled to nurse little Cecilia almost constantly from morning to night, except when visitors came. Then Melissa had to take the babe whether or no. But, from some cause or other, the little innocent always screamed incessantly during the whole time she was in charge of the chambermaid, who coolly kept the door of the nursery open, in order that the mother might have the full benefit of her babe's distress. Twice Uncle Peter came in, while

his niece was engaged below with company ; and once he found the babe actually lying upon its back, in the middle of the floor screaming, and Melissa seated near the window with a book in her hand. This was more than the excitable old man could bear. Catching up the little creature, he drew it tenderly to his bosom, and with soothing words, soon hushed it into quiet, broken at short intervals by a kind of spasmodic sigh or sob. Ere this much had been gained, Melissa was by his side, endeavoring to take the babe from his arms.

With a loud and angry exclamation of reproof, Uncle Peter pushed her from him with a violence that threw her with some force against the opposite wall. As she recovered herself, he made towards her, having lifted his cane from the floor where it had fallen on taking up the babe, with the real intention of making her feel its weight. Perceiving by his manner that the old man was truly in earnest, Melissa precipitately left the room, and hurried down into the kitchen, frightened, and yet highly indignant at the outrage that had been offered her.

The poor little babe that had been screaming at the top of its voice for at least half an hour, was soon asleep in the arms of the old man, whose anger at its cruel treatment was in an exact ratio to the deep and tender love with which he loved it.

It was fully an hour before Mrs. Merlin, relieved from her necessary attentions to visitors, could return to the nursery. For the first half hour after she had resigned Cecilia to the care of Melissa, she was greatly annoyed, and even distressed by her cries ; but these were suddenly quieted, she did not know why, and after that, a thought of her babe did not once pass through her mind. On entering the nursery, she started at the unexpected apparition of Uncle Peter with Cecilia asleep in his arms. As his eye fell upon his niece, an angry frown darkened over the old man's face.

Before either had time to speak, Melissa glided into the room, full to the brim, and ready to run over with indignation at the outrage she had received. She had passed, however, but a few steps beyond the threshold of the door, before Uncle Peter was on his feet, with his cane uplifted, and making towards her with the evident intention of giving her a taste of its quality—at the same time that he applied to her several terms that need not be repeated here. She very naturally shrunk from an encounter with the excited old man, and fled in confusion.

“O dear, Uncle Peter ! What do you mean ?” exclaimed Cecilia, her face growing pale with alarm.

“What do I mean, ha ! Why I mean to trounce that buzzzy ! That's what I mean to do if ever she shows her face in my presence. The cruel, heartless wretch !”

“Oh, Uncle ! Tell me—what has she done ?” eagerly asked Cecilia, laying her hand on the old man's arm.

“She’s done what you’d never found out if she had persevered in it until your child had died of cruel treatment. That’s what she’s done!”

“But what is it, Uncle? Oh, do tell me!” urged Cecilia, suddenly alarmed, endeavoring, as she spoke, to take her sleeping babe from his arms. But he gently pushed her aside, saying, as he did so—

“No—no—I’m going to be her nurse after this. I see that no one can be trusted with her—not even her mother.”

“Do tell me, Uncle, what has been the matter?” Cecilia urged, with tears.

“Where’s Mrs. Gray?”

“She has had to cook since Susan left us.”

“But why didn’t you send Melissa into the kitchen instead of your nurse?”

“She doesn’t know any thing about cooking.”

“Then why didn’t you go into the kitchen with her and show her?”

“Uncle-Peter!”

“You needn’t stand there Uncle-Petering me, madam, as if I had asked you some strange, unheard-of question! Why didn’t you take her into the kitchen and show her—ha?”

“You know very well that I don’t know any more about cooking than she does!” was the half indignant reply.

“You don’t indeed! And yet are mistress of your own house! A pretty affair truly! What kind of a fix would your husband be in, if he didn’t know any thing more about his business than you do about housekeeping?”

“But that’s a different affair altogether,” rejoined the niece.

“I can’t see exactly how. He has to engage daily in active employments, and with his hands, too, as in conducting his correspondence, showing goods, making entries, &c., in order to sustain his family, and bring into it every possible comfort. Suppose he looked upon all the minute details of business as too burdensome, or beneath him, how long do you think you would be able to live independently in your present style? Not six months, let me tell you! And if your husband is compelled thus to devote himself energetically to business for your sake, surely the duty is as binding upon you to devote yourself with a like energy and devotion to the business of your department for his sake and the sake of your family! It is just as necessary, therefore, that you should know how to cook, as it is that he should know how to do any thing connected with his business; for you are no better than he is. His ignorance of any thing in his calling, would injure his worldly interests, and in injuring him, injure you. In like manner your ignorance of any thing in domestic economy, strikes at once at the comfort and health of your husband, yourself and family. You think it beneath a lady of

your supposed standing, I know, to be acquainted with any thing below the parlor. But in holding such opinions, you committed a direct fraud upon your husband in getting married, let me tell you. No man expects, when taking a wife, that he is going to be tied to a fluttering insect—beautiful to look upon when dancing in the sunshine, but of no manner of use to any body whatever."

But this severe cutting could not throw Mrs. Merlin's thoughts away from the mystery connected with her babe and Melissa.

"But tell me, Uncle," she said, in a choking voice, as soon as he had ceased speaking, "what has Melissa been doing to little Cecilia?"

"She has been treating her with cruel neglect!" replied the old man warmly. "When I came in about an hour ago, I found this dear little creature lying upon its back in the middle of the floor, screaming as if it would go into fits, and she sitting by the window reading one of your confounded love-sick novels! I felt like knocking her brains out on the spot, and did send her reeling across the room and against the wall, when she came smirking up to me, after I had taken the child in my arms."

"Is it possible that she neglected the babe in such a way?" Mrs. Merlin said, her face becoming instantly flushed with indignation.

"Yes, it is possible! And that's just the way you may expect to have your children treated so long as your affection is not strong enough to cause you to look after them yourself."

"But Uncle," urged Cecilia, "I had to see the ladies who called this morning, and therefore had to leave the babe in Melissa's care."

"You might have left it in the care of its nurse, whom you can trust: but not in the care of a fly-away thing like Melissa."

"Nurse, you know, has had to be our cook for the last few days."

"Yes, I know. But if you had understood the business of rightly taking care of a house, as every woman who gets married should understand it, there would have been no necessity for sending Mrs. Gray into the kitchen. All this, you see, grows out of your false notions that it is beneath you, or not genteel, to know any thing about domestic affairs, especially such as appertain to the kitchen, which are, really, the most important in the whole economy of a family, for health, and often life are immediately connected with them. Had you known how cooking ought to be done, you could have taken your chambermaid into the kitchen, and shown her how to prepare a meal, instead of sending your nurse down there, and entrusting your babe with such a creature as Melissa. But all this grows out of your ignorance of almost every thing but what is no manner of use to you."

A great deal more, equally to the point, was advanced by Uncle Peter, much to the pain and mortification of Cecilia, and

finally to her acknowledgment that she had been wrong. But this acknowledgment grew out of her seeing the truth in the light of his understanding and perception of it, and not in her own. The consequence was, that she soon thought and felt pretty much as she did before, and acted pretty much in the same way. The reconciliation that took place between her and Uncle Peter, on the occasion of her consenting to see things as he saw them, did not last long. The new cook and chambermaid that soon took their places in her establishment, left her mind free to enter again into her gay round of idleness, at which the old man soon became so offended, that he came again into direct collision with her, and a new breach was made, that did not heal for a long time, although he would visit the house as often as two or three times a week to see little Cecilia.

CHAPTER VI.

Time passes—A great change—Reverses—Mrs. Melrose's friendship tested—Mrs. Merlin in great distress.

One, two, and three years passed rapidly away, during which Mrs. Merlin, who had a second time become a mother, permitted herself to be more and more absorbed in the fashionable frivolities that occupy so much and so unworthily the minds of too large a number of those whose educations have fitted them for spheres of extended usefulness. So pained and disheartened had old Uncle Peter become at all this, that he ceased any longer to protest against his niece's shameful waste of time and neglect of duty. His visits, which had during the first two years of her marriage been very frequent, were now made at long intervals, and professedly to see the children; but really as much for Cecilia's sake as theirs, for the interest he felt in her nothing could weaken or obliterate. But, five years from the time of his niece's marriage, a change came—painful, but salutary.

There are but few instances in real life, where a young person starts with false ideas, carried out into wrong practices, that truth is not taught by reverses or afflictions. How merciful and wise is the Providence that thus chastens! And when society becomes infected with evils, that are adopted by the weak because they are fashionable, and thus pervade whole masses, how certain is the occurrence of some extensive reverses or afflictions, that operate like storms in the atmosphere, purifying social corruptions, and bringing the minds of all back to rest for real happiness upon the basis of truth and nature. As in individual cases, so in these more general instances, may be traced the hand of Divine Providence, correcting and reproofing for good.

In one of those general upheavings of the elements of social organization, arising out of a universal prevalence of commercial disasters, breaking up and reducing to a state of dependence upon daily exertions hundreds of families that had given tone to fashionable society, did Mr. and Mrs. Merlin and the family of Mr. Howard, fall from their high position. With a large family dependent upon him for subsistence, Mr. Howard could do nothing for his daughter and her family. That duty had to devolve upon her husband, whose business had been entirely swept from his control.

During the brief period in which Mr. Merlin's property and business were melting and passing away as rapidly as a snow wreath beneath a summer's sun, he said nothing to his young wife of the terrible reverse that awaited her. In fact, he could not. It was hard enough to bear the burdens already pressing upon him ; but to have added to these the repinings and distress of his wife, was more than he could think of without exquisite pain.

But the trial had to be met, and he at length nerved himself to endure it. Though little more than a boy when married, the mind of young Merlin had rapidly developed itself while actively engaged in business, and at the end of five years, when compelled to yield, he possessed a manly tone of character, and firmness enough to look the storm steadily in the face. And, moreover, in old Uncle Peter he found a steady friend and a competent adviser. To him he submitted all his statements, and sought his advice before taking any important step. In doing so, he acted wisely, for the old man had a cool head, united with much experience in business.

One day, near the close of all arrangements prior to a relinquishment of business, Uncle Peter entered the store of Mr. Merlin, and found him sitting at his desk, in an attitude, and with an expression of deep despondency.

"Come, come, Theodore, this will never do ! You are a man, and must act like a man," he said, laying his hand familiarly upon Merlin's arm. "The ordeal, though severe, will prove you as gold tried in the fire."

"It is not for myself, Uncle Peter, that I feel troubled," Merlin replied in a sad tone. "It is on Cecilia's account. I have not yet been able to break the matter to her, and she yet remains unconscious of the approaching storm, that is now about bursting over her head."

"Then go at once, Theodore, and tell her the whole truth. The sooner this is done the better. It will prove a severe shock to her, without doubt ; and for a time she may sink under it ;—but, in the end it will reveal, I am sure, a latent principle of independence of the world, and a confidence in her own resources that will be worth far more to both of you in the way of producing a state of permanent happiness than could all the wealth of the Indies, were it possible for you to possess it."

"It will be a terrible shock to her."

"Without doubt it will. But you cannot break its force by procrastination. It must and will come in spite of you. Go then, Theodore, and tell her the plain truth. I am sorry, indeed, that you did not confide to her your embarrassments from the first."

"How could I?" the young man replied with feeling. "Her whole delight seems to be in the enjoyment of that society, and those luxuries which wealth and social standing alone can give. To strip from her these is to make her absolutely miserable."

"Not permanently so, I trust. This reverse, I fondly hope, is destined to make her a wiser and a better woman."

"May heaven grant it!" was Merlin's fervent ejaculation.

After the dinner hour, on that day, during which Mr. Merlin had scarcely tasted food, the husband and wife found themselves seated alone. The former, under the conviction that a communication of his real circumstances could be put off no longer, remained for some time silent, endeavoring to think of some form of breaking the painful intelligence to his wife that would not come upon her with too severe a shock. At last he said—

"Cecilia, I am afraid we shall have to give up this house."

"Why so?" she asked in a tone of surprise.

"Because the rent is higher than we can afford to pay."

"Why, what in the world do you mean, Theodore?" exclaimed Mrs. Merlin, with a look of astonishment. "I am sure our house is a common one compared to those in which some of our friends live. Indeed, it was only this morning that I was talking to Mrs. Melrose about this very thing; and she said that it was due to our position in society to live in a much handsomer establishment than we now do. She said that there was a house vacant in Bleecker street, at two thousand dollars, that would be just the thing for us; and we have appointed this afternoon at four to go and look at it."

"Cecilia," her husband resumed, in a sad but firm voice, "we shall not only be compelled to give up this house, but to move into one much smaller. My business has entirely failed, and in a few days I shall be broken up, and not left with a single dollar."

"But my father is rich," Mrs. Merlin replied calmly, "and he will keep us up, and help you into business again."

"Your father, Cecilia, is in no better condition than myself. In less than a week he will be thrown upon the world, like your husband, penniless."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Mrs. Merlin, her face becoming instantly pale as ashes.

"It is, alas! too true, Cecilia. And we stand not thus alone. Hundreds around us are tottering, ready to fall. But, let us remember, that

'To bear is to conquer our fate.'

That within our own breasts lie resources of comfort in all condi-

tions. I still possess health, and spirits unbroken, and trust again to rise."

To this no reply was made other than a gush of tears and a fit of bitter weeping. It was in vain that her husband endeavored to soothe her with words of encouragement and comfort. The suddenly communicated and unexpected intelligence seemed utterly to paralyze all the energies of her mind; to shut out every thought but of herself, and the consequences to herself of the dreadful change about to take place. In the bitterness of the first consciousness of what was to befall her, she wished herself dead. After vainly trying to console and comfort his wife, Mr. Merlin was compelled to leave her and return to his store, where urgent business awaited his attention. As he rose to leave her, he took her hand in his, and pressed it affectionately, murmuring in her ear as he did so, a word of encouragement; but she returned not the pressure of his hand, nor lifted so much as her head to give to her husband a look or a word of genuine sympathy. And thus he left her, his bosom oppressed as if burdened by a heavy weight.

It was about half an hour after his departure that Mrs. Melrose came in, according to appointment. She found Cecilia sitting as her husband had left her, with her face hidden from view.

"My dear Mrs. Merlin! What is the matter?" her visitor asked in an earnest voice, as she perceived that her attitude was one of distress.

"O Mrs. Melrose!" quickly exclaimed Cecilia, lifting her pale, tear-stained face, at the sound of her voice, "what dreadful, dreadful news I have heard! It will kill me!"

"My dear, dear madam!" returned Mrs. Melrose, seating herself by her side, and drawing the head of her friend to her bosom with tenderness,—"what news have you heard? What has happened to so overwhelm you with distress?"

"My husband has just told me," sobbed out Mrs. Merlin, that his business is all broken up, and that we will have to give up this house, and sink, of course, into obscurity. O, is it not dreadful!"

"What do you say?" ejaculated Mrs. Melrose suddenly, in a changed voice, partly withdrawing herself from her fond proximity to her friend. "Broken up in his business!"

"O yes! He says he is all broken up in business, and my father, too; and that we shall have to move into a much smaller house."

"A smaller house! Why, dear me! this is not much more than a pigeon-box of an affair any how!—and going to move into a smaller house! How can he think of such a thing! I came to go with you to see the house in Bleecker street, but I suppose it's no use to go now."

"O no! Of course not. But isn't it dreadful, Mrs. Melrose?"

"It is, indeed, Cecilia," was the rather cold reply. "But as

it can't be helped now, the best thing for you is to bear it as well as you can."

"But how *can* I bear it, Mrs. Melrose?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Cecilia. Other people have had to bear the same things time out of mind, and I suppose you will have to do it with as good a grace as possible. I don't see myself as any good ever comes of crying over spilled milk. But as you ain't going out to look at the house we were speaking about, I must be moving. I have several places to call at this afternoon. So I must bid you good-bye. Try and keep up your spirits. All will no doubt come out right in the end."

There was something so changed, so cold and unsympathizing in Mrs. Melrose's voice and manner as she said this, and then made a movement towards the door, that poor Mrs. Merlin could not be mistaken for a moment in regard to her true feelings. She did not even attempt to make a reply, or to ask her fairweather friend to remain; but suffered her to leave the room and the house without a word.

"Can this be indeed true?—or is it a dream?" she said, grousing herself about half an hour after Mrs. Melrose had gone away, with a feeling of indignation at the heartlessness of one she had ever looked upon as her best friend. "And so, thus ends all her professions of love and friendship! Who could have believed it?"

As Mrs. Merlin uttered these words, she lifted her head, and compressed her lips firmly. Then she began to reflect more calmly and rationally upon the circumstances by which she found herself so unexpectedly surrounded—to think of her father and mother reduced to want in their old age—and to feel deeply for them on account of the sudden calamity that had overtaken them. But all seemed so like a dream, that she found it difficult to realize the truth. While still in this state of mind, Uncle Peter, whose face she had not seen for a month, opened the door of the room in which she was sitting.

"I am here, Cecilia," he said, coming up to her and offering his hand, "to sympathize with you in your troubles, and at the same time to congratulate you on things being no worse than they are."

"I don't know well how they could be much worse," Cecilia said in a gloomy tone, while the tears started from her eyes afresh.

"O yes, my child, they might be a great deal worse. At this very time there are many, very many in this city, and men too with families on their hands, who have not only been broken up in their business, but cannot find any thing to do by which to earn a dollar. Fortunately this will not be your husband's case. True, he will have to give up every thing, and quit business. But, then, I have succeeded this day in securing him a good situation as

clerk, at eight hundred dollars a year. "So you see that there is still daylight ahead, Cecilia."

"Eight hundred dollars a year!" replied the niece in unfeigned astonishment. "And does any one suppose that we can live on eight hundred dollars a year. Why, our rent alone is a thousand dollars."

"Of course you will have to reduce your rent." "And suppose we do reduce it, even as low as five hundred dollars. Will three hundred support us? Our servants' hire alone amounts to that sum."

"You will have to dispense with some of them, for one thing, and live in a house at a rent of one half of five hundred dollars—and perhaps less than that, for another."

"That is out of the question, Uncle Peter. I must have a cook, a nurse, and a chambermaid. Perhaps the waiter might be dispensed with—but I don't see how either. And as for living in some dirty low neighborhood, in a mean house, at two hundred and fifty dollars, that is what I will never consent to do."

"There is no necessity for going into a dirty, low neighborhood; nor for living in a mean house, either. Your true way will be to rent the half of a genteel house in a pleasant and respectable part of the city, and then dispense with all your servants but one."

"Impossible! Who will take care of the children?"

"Let their mother take care of them. They could not have one who would feel more interest for them than she."

"Uncle Peter!"

"I am serious, Cecilia," replied the old man in a soothing tone. "Come now, let me find you once more a reasonable woman. You are aware that both your husband and father are reduced to poverty—are you not?"

"Yes."

"And that the most that it will be possible for your husband to earn, at least for the next twelve months, will be eight hundred dollars?"

"So you have told me."

"And what I have told you is the precise truth. Very well. Now, if your income is but eight hundred dollars, how can you expect to keep three or four servants? Would it be honest for you to employ them, and then not be able to give them their wages? Would it be right for you thus to burden your husband with debts which it would be out of his power to pay?"

"But, Uncle, how is it possible for me to do without a nurse? My youngest baby is only four months old, and still lies at the breast. I can't do any thing with it, you know."

"I don't know any such thing, Cecilia. Nurse will have to wean it, and then hand it over to you. It will be hard for the dear little thing, but it cannot be helped. You will not be able

to keep its nurse more than a few weeks until you get moved and settled in your new home, and become a little accustomed to taking charge of the baby. Your house will be so much smaller that you will not need either a chambermaid or waiter. They would be in your way. Your cook, having much less to do than now, can attend to your chamber and her own, and thus leave you nothing to do but to see after the children."

"And become a perfect slave," Mrs. Merlin said, with indignant warmth.

"If you so please to consider yourself," was the old man's half petulant remark.

"That's just what I don't intend doing."

"Very well. Let's hear what you do intend doing? Come now! Perhaps you can strike out some new way of living on eight hundred dollars a year undreamed of before, in which you can reside in a fine house, with fine furniture, and keep three or four servants. Come! let me hear your plan."

"I don't believe you have a single spark of feeling for me—so I don't! I believe you would be glad to see me brought right down into the gutter!" poor Cecilia exclaimed with bitterness; and then yielded to another flood of tears. As soon as this had in some measure subsided, the old man said in a softened tone :

"Cecilia, my dear child, it is because I really love you that I speak to you plainly. I can see, what you are not willing to see, the necessity for an entire change in your mode of living; a change that must involve many and great sacrifices and privations. But there is only one right course, under these trying circumstances, for you to pursue.; and that is to look your trials steadily in the face, and bravely resolve to meet them with an unshrinking front. Hundreds before you have met and passed safely through far severer trials, and hundreds at this very time, in this very city, and of those, too, raised as tenderly, and as unused as you to rough contact with the world, are bearing up under far heavier burdens than such as are about to be laid upon your shoulders. And will you weakly shrink away and shun your duties, where others have taken up theirs like true women, and performed them with cheerfulness. Let this not be said of my niece. Let her rather think of her husband and her children, and for their sakes resolve to brave nobly the storm that is breaking over her head."

At this moment, when Cecilia was beginning to listen calmly, and really to feel in a measure strengthened and inspirited by Uncle Peter's words, the door of the room in which they sat was thrown suddenly open, and her mother, Mrs. Howard, came sweeping in, her countenance exhibiting the deepest anguish.

"O, my child! my dear child!" she exclaimed in a tone of passionate distress, rushing forward and throwing her arms around Cecilia. "What is to become of us all! What is to become of you, my poor, dear child! Oh! Oh! Oh dear! Oh!"

And then followed a scene of sobbing and moaning, that, instead of softening Uncle Peter in the slightest degree, irritated him so much that, to use his own words afterwards, he could hardly keep his hands off of his sister. Finding that all hope of doing any thing towards making Cecilia conscious of her duty just at that time, was at an end, the old man took up his hat, and, without a word, left the house and his sister and niece to pass through this scene of weak distress alone.

CHAPTER VII.

Coming down in life.—A hard task.—Good results soon apparent.

No reluctance, no repining, could stop the steady progress of events. In a little while, amid tears and sobs, Mrs. Merlin removed from her elegant residence, and, with but a remnant of her fine furniture, took up her abode in the half of a house, at two hundred dollars a year.

Thus suddenly reduced from a richly furnished mansion, with cook, chambermaid, nurse and waiter at command, to half of a small house, with three children, and only one servant, Cecilia felt like giving up in despair. For such a condition she had no resources. Although she had finished her education, it was for a condition in life far different from the one into which she had now been thrown, and therefore the acquirements, which she had spent some four or five years to obtain, were to her altogether useless.

One day, two weeks after she had retired to her now humble abode, Uncle Peter called in to see her, and found her in tears.

"Why do you weep, my dear niece?" he asked tenderly, taking her small white hand, unused to any severer employment than that of fingering the piano, or handling the drawing pencil.

"How can you ask me, Uncle Peter? Just see the condition to which I am reduced!"

"But you know, Cecilia, that there are hundreds and thousands in the world in the same condition, who are not only cheerful, but happy in their humble lot."

"And if they have no spirit above such a condition, I am sure that I have!" Mrs. Merlin replied, somewhat warmly.

"You do not really know, my dear child, what you are talking about," Uncle Peter said, in a serious tone. "No repinings on your part, no reluctance at entering into the duties that are now required of you, can possibly avail any thing. These will not change your new relations. It is painful, I know, deeply painful to be thus suddenly brought down; but true wisdom is to extract,

like the bee, honey from every flower, whether it be the gaudy pride of the gay parterre, or the humble daisy of the meadow. To your new condition there appertain delights, as well as there did to your former more elevated one. Enter then into these delights, my dear Cecilia. Be true to yourself, to your children, and to your husband."

" You still speak in riddles to me, Uncle, as you have almost always done. But you hear how little George is fretting! He is hungry, and I must go down into the kitchen and prepare him some food. Since I have had to let my nurse go, I have been compelled to attend to him all myself, for the servant I have cannot be trusted to feed him. And, any how, she has enough to do without seeing after the children."

" Go then at once, Cecilia, and get the dear little fellow something to eat. I will keep him and take care of the other children, while you are gone."

In the course of ten minutes, Mrs. Merlin returned with a cup of milk and water, warmed and sweetened, and tried to feed her babe, that was only a few months old, and had just been weaned from its nurse. Although she could run her fingers with freedom and grace over the keys of a piano, or paint a flower with delicate skill, yet the spoon was held so awkwardly, or the food was, from some cause, so unpalatable, that, for a time, the child struggled and cried at every attempt to cause it to pass his lips. Poor Mrs. Merlin fretted and worried, and even cried as heartily as did little George.

" It's no use, Uncle. I can never learn him to feed!" she at length said, dropping the spoon in the cup, and leaning back in an attitude of despair.

" Wouldn't he let the nurse feed him?" Uncle Peter asked in a calm tone of voice.

" O, yes; she could feed him well enough."

" Then you can do the same, of course."

" But you saw, Uncle, as well as I did, that he wouldn't take a drop of the milk."

" O yes. But then, if he would feed for the nurse, and will not for you, it is a sign, of course, that you don't put the spoon into his mouth rightly, or that the milk has not been prepared to suit his taste. Let me taste it. I think I ought to know something about this business, if I am an old bachelor, for I have fed you, when you were not much older than little George, many a time. O, you've got it a great deal too hot, Cecilia. Why, even now, it is warm enough almost to burn his little mouth. Take another spoonful and blow it, and then try if he will not feed more kindly."

Mrs. Merlin made the effort, and, sure enough, little George sipped his food with evident tokens of satisfaction.

" See there!" Uncle Peter said; " any thing is easy enough when we once know how to do it." Then with one of his pecu-

so discouraged and distressed in mind, that I know not what to do. O, if she would only try and be reconciled to what cannot now be changed, how happy I should be! ———”

Before Uncle Peter had half finished the few first sentences, Mrs. Merlin was on her feet, looking him earnestly, and with a surprised expression, in the face.

“Did he say that? Did he say that, Uncle Peter?” she asked, in a husky voice, interrupting him before he had concluded what he wished to say, catching, at the same time, hold of his arm and looking him still more earnestly in the face.

“They were his very words, Cecilia.”

“How wicked I have been,” the young wife and mother ejaculated in a changed tone—“thus to think only of myself, and care only for myself! From this time out I will try and be cheerful, if it is only for his sake.”

“I am glad to hear you say so, my dear niece! In this you will be successful, far beyond your own expectations; for, in the very effort to consider others, and make others happy, will you find a delight that never springs from merely selfish considerations. The consciousness that, by your *endeavor* to seem cheerful, you have dispelled a shadow from your husband’s heart, will make you *really* cheerful. And thus you will gain strength to persevere. Gradually, the way will open before you, in which you may walk, and find pleasures strewn on either side, such as you never dreamed were to be found in the paths of humble life.”

“But, my heart sinks when I reflect, dear Uncle, that I am thoroughly ignorant of the duties which, in my new station, devolve upon me.”

“Be not discouraged at this thought, Cecilia, only be willing to learn, and that willingness will make you an apt scholar. In your mother, you will find a competent adviser; and my wonder is, and has been why she never imparted to you a knowledge of those domestic duties so requisite for a wife and mother, of which she is so conversant herself.”

“I feel, Uncle,” Mrs. Merlin replied, “that my education has indeed been incomplete. I have studied and learned many things—but not a single one of them seems of use to me now. The poor girl, who can scarcely read or write, could perform a large portion of the duties which now devolve upon me, far better than I.”

“Let not such thoughts discourage you. Think, rather, that in your keeping is the happiness of your husband and children, and resolve that you will be true to the trust. I know that, hitherto, you have looked upon domestic employments as beneath you: as fit only for servants. In this you were wrong. No employment, in which we can be of use to others, is degrading. Surely, it cannot be more degrading for you to knead a loaf of bread, or cook a dinner, or make your children’s clothes, than it is for your husband to sit at the desk all day, poring over account books,

or for him to attend to the customers who come into his employer's store. By doing the one, he is enabled to procure you a house to live in with wholesome food, and comfortable clothing; and by doing, or looking after the other, and seeing that it is done well, you assist to make the home he has provided much more comfortable for him and your children."

"I feel deeply the truth of what you say," Mrs. Merlin replied; "and still deeper my own thoughtlessness and folly. From this hour I will try to be cheerful and do all I can to make my husband's home comfortable and happy. Come and see me often, Uncle; and when you go home, tell Ma that I wish she would come over here this afternoon."

"I will drop in frequently, my child; and when I come, freely tell me all your trials and difficulties. I must go now, and in going, I would remark, that it will help you much to think, that this great change has taken place in your condition for good. All events are under the direction or permission of the Lord, and are all overruled for our good. Adversity is as often a real blessing as prosperity. Try, then, to elevate your mind with a feeling of confidence in Heaven, and this will give you a power to act, as duty calls, with calm contentment. Think of the Divine Being as your father, and then remember that His very nature is love—that His eye is upon you, and that He is endeavoring all the while to lead you into those paths wherein true happiness is alone to be found. Such thoughts will give you confidence and hope. Forget all about what the world may say or think of you. That is nothing. Duty is every thing."

When Uncle Peter went away, Mrs. Merlin felt that within her existed a new impulse to action. She felt far more cheerful, and resolved to enter into, and perform the duties that might devolve upon her, with a willing heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

The uses of adversity showing themselves more plainly.—Going to work earnestly.—A year's experience.—An old friend restored.

THE single practical lesson, enforced by sound precepts, which Cecilia had been willing to receive from Uncle Peter, opened her eyes to an entirely new view of life. Still, she saw but imperfectly; nevertheless the strong desire awakened to see life in its true relations, and to see and perform aright her duties, revealed, even under that imperfect vision, enough to inspire her with a degree of cheerfulness and confidence.

"It really warms my heart to see a smile on your lip, and light in your eye again, Cecilia," her husband said, as he sat by her side that evening, and played with the laughing babe in her lap.

"How thoughtless and selfish I have been, dear Theodore," Mrs. Merlin replied tenderly, looking him in the face, while her eye grew dim with the rising moisture. "But I will try, for your sake, to be more cheerful and contented."

"How glad I shall be, my dear Cecilia! to see you again, even if circumstances are changed with us, less sorrowful than you have been for the last few weeks. Surely, we may be happy, even in our present altered condition! Our little ones are still left to us, and we have a comfortable home, although not surrounded with elegancies." And he kissed, tenderly, the cheek of his young wife.

Although, when married, Theodore Merlin was but a mere boy, with his rational mind just beginning its development, yet, in the few years that had passed since that event, he had become a man, and one of independent thought. Long before his business shared the fate of that of hundreds around him, he had ceased to feel interested in the hollow pretensions of fashionable life, and was fully sensible of their enervating and blinding influence. To him, then, the necessity which compelled them to retire into obscurity, was deeply painful only on account of his wife.

The true expression of pleasure that gave life to the tone, and animation to the countenance of her husband, was reflected back from the heart of Mrs. Merlin, and she felt lighter and happier than she had been since the day of her banishment from her luxurious home.

"I know," she said, after the tears of pleasure that her husband's affectionate words and act had called forth had been dried, "that even here we may be happy. Uncle Peter has, in times past, often spoken to me of the delights to be found in the daily performance of duty—but it seemed to me a strange language. Now I understand something of his meaning. Though compelled to take upon myself many domestic duties, yet even while acting under the force of circumstances, I have felt something of the delight to which he has alluded. Still, when I find myself surrounded by circumstances so new and unexpected, and painfully conscious at the same time that I know really nothing of the way in which rightly to act in them, I feel discouraged."

As she said this her voice trembled, and she laid her head upon her husband's shoulder. Tears once more came to her eyes, and stole out upon her cheeks. These were kissed away tenderly, and a few soothing and encouraging words spoken, that soon restored Cecilia to calmness and peace.

When tea was ready, and the servant had withdrawn, Mr. and Mrs. Merlin drew up to the table, each experiencing a feeling of quiet enjoyment to which they had before been strangers. There

was now no waiter, as before, to hand the tea from a side-table, and perform even the most trifling offices, for his apparently almost helpless master and mistress. Mrs. Merlin poured out the tea, and each noted and endeavored to supply the little wants of the other.

"We may be happy even here," Mr. Merlin said, while a smile lit up his countenance.

"I feel now that we may," his wife replied, her heart warming with an emotion of real pleasure. "And, perhaps, much happier. But, before this can take place, I shall have a great deal to learn. Hitherto I have thought only of pleasure and show. Now, when I begin to feel desirous of discharging my duties as a wife and mother, I find myself altogether unfitted for the station."

"But you will learn all in good time," Mr. Merlin said, encouragingly.

"I hope so. And yet even to hope seems vain. What do I know? Really nothing of household affairs,—and yet neither my husband nor children can be rendered comfortable unless through my knowledge of and active participation in these."

"We will be very indulgent," Mr. Merlin returned, smiling. "Not one of your short comings shall be noticed by me. All I will ask is, that you try to be cheerful."

"As that is the least I can do for so kind a husband, I will try," Cecilia said in a trembling voice.

A pause of a few minutes ensued, when she resumed in a livelier, but earnest tone, while a smile played about her lips—

"I want you to buy me a cooking-book, and one on domestic economy, Theodore."

"Indeed! Then you are going to work in real earnest?"

"I am. To finish the education that I had vainly imagined was completed years ago."

"You have changed suddenly, Cecilia," her husband remarked, in some surprise.

"Not before a change was required, you will say. Well, perhaps not. I had a visit from Uncle Peter to-day, and for the first time in my life perceived that what I had always been disposed to call singularities of thought, and old-fashioned notions, to be only good common sense. Suddenly, the scales seemed to fall from my eyes, and I saw every thing around me under a new aspect, and with new relations. And I felt that it was possible to be happy even in this, our fallen condition. But, not unless I entered into, and performed cheerfully, the duties that this condition required of me. To enter into these, however irksome they may at first be, I am now resolved, trusting to find my reward in them."

"And you will most certainly find your reward, dear Cecilia!" her husband replied, with emotion.

"I trust that I shall—I know that I shall," the wife replied, with animation.

"And yet, my dear Cecilia, you must not, under the warming and encouraging influence of this new impulse, forget that old habits are not to be laid aside all at once, and new duties assumed without, like a new garment, their pressing somewhere, and perhaps with much pain. I say this, in order to prepare your mind for the states that must inevitably return, and under which you cannot but experience feelings of discouragement. Do not be cast down in spirits when these come upon you. Do not sit down and indulge in feelings of despondency, but at once enter into some known duty, and fix your mind upon its faithful performance."

"I will try to act right, and I will try to feel right."

"The trial will be a successful one, though it be accompanied with much wearisomeness and much reluctance."

"It is strange how a little thing will sometimes alter our whole train of thought, and fill our minds with new motives to action," Mrs. Merlin said, after a brief silence. "When Uncle Peter came in this morning, I never felt so outdone and heart-sick in my life. But a few words from him, and a little instruction in a plain duty that I almost despaired of performing, coming as they did just at the right time, awoke my mind to new activity. It seemed as if a light had suddenly broken in upon my mind. I saw every thing around me, and my own position, with other eyes than those I had hitherto observed with. What an idle and useless life I have led!"

"Both of us, my dear Cecilia, will, I trust, prove the words of a sweet poet to be true—

'The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.'

'We were living a false life. Hereafter may we see more clearly, and live with better ends.'

After the tea-things were cleared away, Mr. and Mrs. Merlin passed the evening in pleasant conversation, mutually strengthening each other in good resolutions. From that time, a new era was begun in the life of Cecilia. The books she had desired were brought; and as one of them discussed, at length, the practical duties of the wife and mother, she read it, and studied it with the most careful attention, consenting to and imbuing her mind with its principles. Now, her rational mind, that had for years been covered up and rendered inactive by artificial habits, and artificial modes of thought, found a healthy development. She was not by nature weak, effeminate, and helpless—a sound mental constitution had been warped and twisted into a conventional shape—the stays once fully removed, and thrown aside, a healthy action supervened, and the artificial lady of fashion became the WOMAN. But it must not be supposed that this healthy action was at once

full and perfect, or that the change caused no pain. Habit had rendered old customs and modes of thought almost necessary—violence to these could not be otherwise than painful. But as new customs and modes of thought took the place of older ones, the machinery of the mind moved on again, and gradually harmony of motion was acquired by the whole. Still, the process was slow, and marked by many seasons of discouragement, reluctance, and painful despondency. Unused to any kind of fatiguing labor, that which now devolved upon her, in the care of her children, and a general supervision of her household, was, for a time, so severe as almost to make her sink under it.

"I really feel, sometimes, as if I must give up," she said one day to Uncle Peter, who had called in, as he frequently did, to drop a word of encouragement. "No one knows how exceedingly tired I become, almost every day, with the care of my three children, all of whom need constant attention."

"Still, with this constant attention to your children and family concerns, do you not feel that such employment is equally as reputable as a constant round of idle visitings, in which no real good is given or received?"

"O, yes—and that it is far more so. I have often thought lately how utterly wasted my time has been since I left school. I did no real good to any one, and retrograded, instead of advancing. I vainly thought that there was nothing more for me to do or to learn."

"And there, my child, lies the fatal error of thousands. How glad I am that you see it so clearly! Young ladies go to school to learn—that is the end which is had in view, not the means to an end. When they have finished their education, as it is called, there the matter rests. They have nothing more to do but to get married, and spend their time in idleness."

"A true picture. I do not now remember a single young lady who was in the same class with me at school, who seemed to have an idea of turning to any useful purpose the rudiments of an education which she was acquiring. She expected to be valued because she was educated; and that was the impulse that caused her to study."

"All these, for active life, when they enter into its walks, are literally good for nothing," Uncle Peter said with some warmth.

"As, for instance, your niece Cecilia, with her finished education," Mrs. Merlin remarked, with a smile.

"We will except her now," Uncle Peter said, smiling in return, "although she was well nigh spoiled. But you complained a few minutes since of feeling exceedingly fatigued, and almost discouraged, sometimes."

"Indeed I do."

"A nurse or chambermaid will often go through much more

than now falls to your lot, and all the while seem cheerful, and rarely fatigued."

"O yes. I have often seen women, who were really far more delicate than I am, attending to three or four children, and bearing with the confinement of a nursery, and yet always cheerful, and never worn down, as I sometimes am."

"And why was this?"

"Because they were used to it. I must get used to it, I suppose."

"But they were cheerful?"

"I do not know that I could explain to you the reason of that, unless it be to say, that they had no ideas above their condition."

"That will not fully explain the matter, Cecilia. Many of these persons have others dependent upon them—an aged mother, perhaps, or an invalid sister. All have some end in view. And it is in the effort to attain this end, that they give their services to others for wages. The consciousness that in their labor resides the means to the end they desire, makes them perform that labor with ease and cheerfulness. And to increase this cheerfulness is the affection which, as nurses, they feel for the children committed to their care, or as servants to the families in which they reside."

"And what end should I have in view, to make me cheerful? Sometimes I feel as if in this regular routine of care, I was wasting my time. And then I can see no end to it. No resting-place ahead."

"No time is wasted in which we perform some use to others," Uncle Peter replied. "You ask what end you should have in view? The good of your children, and the comfort and health of your husband. What nobler or more inspiring motives could any one have to action? Are you not willing to devote your every effort for them? Surely such an end is a worthy one!"

"I see it, I feel," Mrs. Merlin replied, after a thoughtful pause.

"Try then, Cecilia, to keep such thoughts ever before your mind. When you feel disposed to flag in your exertions, think of your children, and how they demand your every care and exertion. Think, too, of your husband, how he is ever toiling both for you and them, and resolve to share with, and if possible, lighten his labors. In such a work of love, how rich will be the reward your heart will reap."

Thus did Uncle Peter endeavor to impart new motives and new power, and his effort was not in vain. Necessity is an excellent teacher, and so Mrs. Merlin found. Even when disposed to relax her efforts and give way to disheartening thoughts, necessity prompted to action. And so by a power that she could not resist, was she kept walking in the right path, until her feet became used to the new and uneven way. At the end of the first year that passed after the change in her husband's circumstances,

Mrs. Merlin had become tolerably well versed in household affairs, and what was still better, was able to perceive that her duty lay in an attention to them. Her constant *cheerful* performance was a much harder lesson to learn. But in this, too, was she making some progress, slow, to be sure, but steady.

A year's experience, with her thoughts and affections running in new currents during that period, had done much for the young wife and mother. Yet had she suffered deeply, at times, from the loneliness consequent upon a separation from those with whom she had long held pleasant intercourse. Mrs. Melrose had been thrown in her way three or four times during the year—but had recognized her only once, and then in a very cold, indifferent manner. This disturbed her mind, in spite of all her reasonings and indignant contempt of such hollow-heartedness.

“I could not have believed that there was so much around me that was really false—so many professions of regard that were no better than sounding brass,” she remarked to Uncle Peter, in allusion to the conduct of Mrs. Melrose.

“Mrs. Melrose is not a fair sample of the social circle in which you moved.”

“Still, not more than one or two of my old acquaintances have seemed to remember the fact of my existence.”

“This may not arise altogether from the fact that they were false in their former professions of regard.”

“If they had been true, would any change in my circumstances have affected them?”

“Perhaps you will better understand this matter if I call your attention to a fact or two. You remember how intimate you and Sarah Minturn were at one time.”

“Yes.”

“You were much attached to her, I believe.”

“I was, truly. I don't know any friend for whom I had a more sincere regard than I had for her.”

“Very well. You remember the brilliant but brief career of her husband? How he flashed before our eyes for a little while, attracting the notice of every one, and then sunk down into obscurity and insignificance.”

“O yes. And sadly grieved was I for poor Sarah. My heart ached for her for months afterwards.”

“Still, if I am not mistaken, you never visited her once in her obscure condition?”

Cecilia's face reddened at this allegation, and she was so confused for some moments that she could not reply. At length she said—

“What you say is true, Uncle. And yet, I do not think my reason for not continuing to visit her was grounded in the respect I had entertained for her station, instead of her character. Indeed, I am sure it was not; for I remember that so much was I affected

with sympathy for her, that I was troubled whenever a thought of her crossed my mind. Many and many an hour have I lain awake, thinking of her humbled and deeply trying condition. And yet I never saw her after her husband's failure. The false views I entertained in regard to social intercourse no doubt had their influence with me; but the principal reason why I never sought her out in her humble and secluded state, was the instinctive consciousness I felt that to see her under all the circumstances would only add to her mortification and distress. It would have been impossible for me truly to have sympathized with her. My presence, therefore, would have been more oppressive than consoling. And more than all that—those who sink down from a high place are sensitive. Pride may be wounded when only kindness is meant."

"Are you not willing to suppose," Uncle Peter said, as Cecilia paused, "that among many of those with whom you were once intimate, similar feelings may exist in regard to you?"

"Perhaps your inference is just."

"I know that it is."

"How do you know that it is?" Cecilia asked, in a tone of surprise.

"I know so from the best of reasons. You are frequently inquired after."

"Me!—by whom?"

"Certainly, you! And by many of your former friends, some of whom frequently express a desire to see you, but hesitate to call upon you, lest their visit be fraught with much more pain than pleasure."

"How do you know all this, Uncle Peter?" was asked with a still stronger expression of surprise.

"In the plainest way. Such inquiries are often made to me."

"To you! Pray, who among my old friends do you meet?"

"O, a good many of them. There is Mrs. Hartley. I call on her every week or two, to see her. She always inquires after you. And there is your old particular friend and school-mate, Mrs. Craven, who never was quite so silly as the majority of those who are polished off at your finishing shop. I see her frequently, and also a good many others whom I could name."

"But you never mentioned this to me before, Uncle?"

"I never had occasion to do so. Besides, I did not suppose my continuing to visit among my old friends and acquaintances would be a matter of surprise to you or any one else. Why should it?"

"I don't know—but—but—"

"But you thought, because your position in society had depended upon your husband's and your father's wealth, that mine rested upon no surer foundation. Or, perhaps, something had induced you to believe that I was received into society and tolerated

for your sakes. If such were your ideas, know, now, that they were erroneous. Your downfall has made no difference with me. It has not cost me a friend that I valued."

Mrs. Merlin was surprised, and silent.

"Mrs. Hartley," continued the old man, "often asks after you, and is really as familiar with your history since what you sometimes erroneously call your misfortunes, as I am myself. She has often desired to call upon you, but I have never encouraged her to do so."

"Uncle Peter!"

"It is true, my dear girl! But I had my reasons, as you may suppose."

"Your reasons? But, pray, what possible reasons could you have for not wishing Mrs. Hartley to call upon me?"

"Reasons which even now I am afraid you are not fully prepared to understand, and so I shall not give them."

"But, Uncle—"

At this moment the servant threw open the door of Mrs. Merlin's single, small parlor, where she sat with Uncle Peter, and announced the subject of their conversation, who stood just behind her, and advanced into the room the instant her name was mentioned.

"Mrs. Hartley!" ejaculated Cecilia, starting to her feet, with a face that had become instantly flushed.

"My dear Cecilia!" returned her old friend, quickly approaching and embracing her. "Let me twice crave your pardon—once, for having so long delayed this visit; and then for having, even at this period, forced myself into your quiet seclusion."

The tears came into Mrs. Hartley's eyes as she said this, while her voice trembled so that she could scarcely finish the sentence.

"I have never ceased to think of you, my dear friend," she at length resumed, "since your sudden and distressing removal from that circle in which we had so long enjoyed pleasant intercourse. You may have thought yourself forgotten; but your kind old Uncle here knows better, and I hope has often told you better. From him I have learned all about your trials, and the heroic courage with which you have met them. And to him I have never failed to express a wish to see you. But (and I must blame him for it) I never could get him to say that he thought that you would be glad to see me. And I have come at last in spite of him."

"Why, Uncle Peter!" exclaimed Cecilia, reproachfully, "this is, indeed, too bad!"

"Scold away, child!" the old man rejoined, laughing with delight until the tears streamed down his face—"I can bear it all."

"But, indeed, I think you were not kind," Mrs. Hartley now said, as she seated herself with Mrs. Merlin's hand within her's. "Cecilia has had a year of sore trial, during which the counsel

and affectionate sympathy of a friend would have been every thing to her. To deny her even this consolation and support in her trouble, was hardly right in you."

"All's well that ends well," returned the old man, half-gravely. "And so even Cecilia will think before she dies, I hope. She needed some severe discipline, and I was perfectly willing that she should receive it. It has done her good. It has taken the scales from her eyes. It has brought out the woman. Uncle Peter knows what he's about. And whether every body thinks it right or not, he will have his own way. But, as you have come, even before I advised you to do so, but still at the best time, I will leave you alone with 'Celia. Women are women, and like a little closet gossip now and then. So good-bye. But, mind, Mrs. Hartley," added the old man, laughing, as he held the door in his hand—"Don't mar all that a year has done for my little niece with your tittle-tattle."

CHAPTER IX.

A cheering Interview.

"SINGULAR, but possessing one of the best of hearts," replied Mrs. Hartley, as Uncle Peter closed the door after him.

"He does not seem to me half so singular now as he did a few years ago," returned Mrs. Merlin. "Many, many kind acts and lessons of wisdom have endeared him to me, and made even his odd ways and strange notions not only tolerable, but even pleasant. There is no doubt of his heart being in the right place."

"None in the world. Even his odd, rough ways, are only assumed as kind of counteracting agents to some follies that he wishes to correct. He can use polished, and even beautiful language, when he chooses, and always does so when presenting any subject in which he takes a deep interest. I remember, on one occasion at my house, that he joined in with a few gentlemen who were discussing some important general principles in the morality of political economy. I don't know when I was more surprised than I was at the clearness and soundness of his views, expressed in really eloquent language. The gentlemen present seemed to understand his worth fully, for he was listened to with marked attention and deference, and his opinions weighed with the candor and fairness they deserved. At least this was so except in a single instance. One of the most wordy and forward of those engaged in the conversation was a young man with a really fine mind, well cultivated, but who was self-opinionated to rather an offensive degree. He replied to one of Uncle Peter's positions in rather a light manner. The old man, you know, warms up in

an instant. He did so on this occasion. It was with difficulty that I could suppress a smile at the utter discomfiture of the young man; although I could not help blaming Uncle Peter a little for one biting sarcasm that he uttered, in the very truth of which lay its severity."

"I can understand that very well. Many a one of those cutting sarcasms have I had to bear—but never, I am inclined to think, undeserved. I have no doubt that he used to do a great many queer things, and express a great many odd and vulgar sentiments in the presence of some of my double-refined young lady acquaintances, for no other reason than just to mortify me. But I heartily forgive him all. I know, now, that he loves me truly. His conduct towards me since our reverses, has fully satisfied me of this. He might have been gentler with me, and shown me more sympathy; but, perhaps, it would not have done me so much good. At least I am willing to think so."

"Such a thought will do you no harm, certainly. But, tell me, my dear Mrs. Merlin, how you are, and how you are getting along. Talk to me freely, as you would to your own sister. Your trials, I know, have been great. That you have nobly met them, I have already been told. But, even in a woman's heroism, there is much that she can speak of only to a woman—much lingering in her heart, that only can be breathed into a woman's ear—much in her bosom with which only a woman can truly sympathize. Thus far you have been blessed with no friend into whose willing ear you could pour out every thought and feeling—to whom you could speak of trials under which the spirit had well-nigh sunk—of temptations resisted and overcome—of despondency that made the heart feel like yielding up the struggle. Some of these states of mind, Uncle Peter, so far as he saw them, viewed as weaknesses; and no doubt even opposed them, regardless of the acute pain he occasioned."

"And yet I will not blame him," Cecilia said, the tears gathering in her eyes. "He did all for the best. But, sometimes, when I felt unusually depressed, if, instead of opposing, as you say, he had met me with tender sympathy—had spoken some pitying word—had seemed to feel with me and for me, it would have been like oil upon the waters of my troubled heart. I was weak, I know, and vain, and foolish. But I could not see this all at once. Oh, how often and often have I wished for some woman's breast, upon which to lay my head! But my weary path I had to tread alone."

Mrs. Hartley was touched at this.

"Deeply do I now blame myself," she said, "for not having followed the promptings of my heart when you first felt the heavy hand of misfortune. It was delicacy that kept me away—but I now acknowledge it to have been a false delicacy."

"A visit from an old friend which could truly enter into my

feelings, and help me to bear up under painful trials, would have been felt as a great kindness, instead of an intrusion. It would have helped to reconcile me to the change which I had to endure. But to have every tie of friendship at once severed—to have loneliness and neglect added to my other sources of pain, was to crush my spirits to the earth. How I bore up under all these circumstances I hardly know. Not in my own strength, I am sure."

"In that you have spoken truly, my dear friend," Mrs. Hartley said quickly, and with much emotion. "Not in our own strength are we able to bear up under any affliction, much less one so severe and all-pervading as that through which you have been called to pass. Though your earthly friends stood aloof, yet One was intimately nigh to sustain you, and impart strength according to your day. And He has sustained you far better than could words of comfort and sympathy from any earthly friend. It rejoices my heart to find that you have learned to see the Source from whence true strength cometh."

"I spoke but from a deep sense of my own weakness," Cecilia replied to this. "I cannot say that I have been able truly to see the Source from whence my strength has come."

"You acknowledge an overruling Providence?"

"Yes—I believe there is a general overruling Providence."

"And a Providence regarding every particular in a man's life?"

"That, I believe, is thought by many to be the case. But I don't know. There is, I have no doubt, a general Providence."

"Can there be any such a thing, my dear, as a general Providence, except such as is made up of particulars. A whole cannot be conceived of without its parts. If there is, in regard to you, a general Providence, it must be in consequence of an aggregation of particular providences. But we need not reason upon this subject. The Word of God fully instructs us in regard to it. 'Even the very hairs of your head are numbered,' was not spoken as an unmeaning sentence. How strikingly does it set forth the consoling doctrine of a particular and intimate Providence."

"But does not that seem a strange Providence that should so suddenly cast down, and so painfully afflict any one as I have been afflicted?"

"We were born to an eternal existence?"

"Yes, I fully believe that."

"To which your brief stay upon this earth will be as nothing?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Now, from this fact, what does reason teach you would be the operations of Providence? Would they mainly regard this natural life, or an eternal life?"

"An eternal life, I should think," Mrs. Merlin said, after a thoughtful pause.

"Yes, certainly. For that is of infinite importance. Then

you can understand, I suppose, how, if it were necessary to our eternal good, even the deepest afflictions would be sent?"

"Yes."

"And can you not also understand another and kindred truth, that, as the Lord is a being of infinite goodness, from which must necessarily flow infinite compassion, he never suffers any to be afflicted, unless it is necessary for their spiritual good?"

"I suppose that would follow, necessarily."

"Very well. Then endeavor, in all sincerity, to make an application of this truth to yourself. Let it be under your feet as something to stand upon firmly. Let it lead you to close self-examination, and determine you to oppose every principle that you discover within your bosom that is not true, and every affection that is not good. Then will you be enabled to extract sweets from a bitter cup,—to find, even in the gloomy night, some bright star to guide you. Pardon me for thus turning your thoughts to a serious theme. It is one with which our best interests are so intimately blended, that I cannot refrain from alluding to it now. Feeling as I do, that your sufferings have been designed to lead you to see within your own bosom things which must be removed before you can be truly happy, I feel anxious that you should not suffer in vain."

"Thus far, my dear madam; I feel that I have not suffered in vain. The scales have been torn from my eyes, and I have been led to see the difference between a true and a false life. Before, I was a mere artificial being—a gay insect, with no thought beyond the sunshine and blossoms of a summer day. Now I am conscious that I have many duties to perform. Would that I could enter into them with a true affection! I see my duty, and go forward in the effort to perform it. But I am often grieved because I do not love my duty."

"You are in the right way, Cecilia," Mrs. Hartley said, with earnest tenderness. "Obedience to truth is always first in order. The love of it will surely follow sincere and persevering obedience. This is a spiritual law. Go forward, then, looking neither to the right nor the left. Your reward is before you."

"How pleasant a state it must be wherein one can love as well as see her duty," Mrs. Merlin said, with a smile of pleasure at the thought.

"Pleasant, indeed. But that state may be considered as a beautiful and delightful city, to reach which a toilsome journey has to be taken. It is not attained but by labor and toil, and earnest struggles against various difficulties and hindrances."

"I feel that truth sensibly. And I feel also another and all-sustaining truth: the reward is worth all the labor, a thousand and a thousand fold."

"Yes, that it is. I have had many and many such a struggle, unseen and unknown, except in my own bosom, and my re-

ward has been sweet," Mrs. Hartley said, while her voice trembled.

" You ! What struggles for duty could you have ever endured ? When in affluence, I never thought of duty."

" And it is, doubtless, for that reason, that our Heavenly Father has seen best to afflict you. No one here is permitted to lead an altogether useless life. If blessed with affluence, and this is so used in selfish gratifications as to encourage mere idleness and neglect of all social uses, it happens in nearly every such instance, that worldly goods are taken away, and their former possessor compelled to enter upon the performance of duties that cannot be put aside. How strikingly does your own case illustrate this!"

" It certainly does. But nearly all who moved in fashionable life with me, were alike unmindful of duty."

" And have not a large number of these very individuals fallen, like you, from their condition of ease and idleness ? But, even in the richer circles, Mrs. Merlin, are many who feel sensibly their social and domestic obligations. I know many who give the strictest attention to household cares, from a conscientious regard to duty."

" Who shut themselves up in their kitchens, and neglect the virtues of social life?"

" No, Mrs. Merlin. That does not follow as a natural consequence. A woman who has the means at command, is bound to employ suitable domestics to perform her household labors. But she is at the same time as much bound to direct and govern her domestics, as to employ them ; and this as well for the sake of true order in her family, as for the comfort and happiness of the whole."

" But, surely, you do not consider social visitings an idle waste of time?"

" By no means. If I did, I would never pay another visit in my life. Is my visit to you a mere waste of time?"

" I hope not," Cecilia returned, earnestly. " To me it is a blessing. You are lifting up my heart, and filling it with strength."

" And so should every visit we make be a blessing to some one ; or, rather, I should have said, a blessing either to another or to ourselves. For either in giving or receiving strength, we are in the way of duty. Sometimes I have stepped from my door, feeling much depressed in spirit on account of some trial through which I have had to pass. There was some friend upon whom I felt that I ought to call ; and yet I would much rather have remained in the seclusion of my own chamber. But an obedience to what seemed to me right, caused me to conquer my own reluctant feelings. Under such circumstances, I have always been comforted. That very friend has been the medium of communi-

cating some encouraging sentiment; or she has strengthened me by an example of firmness and self-sacrificing devotion."

"But, in my circle of friends, I never heard the solemn word, duty. I never remember to have heard any one converse about domestic economy," Mrs Merlin said.

"And you frequently called in to see me?"

"Yes, but you never alluded to such subjects."

"True. And it was because I knew that you could not feel any interest in them. I therefore met you where you could be met. But I had and still have many friends whom I often meet, and with whom I often converse about social and domestic duties. Mutually we strengthen each other's hands, and confirm each other's wavering purposes."

"Few, very few such were numbered among my friends."

"More than you might be inclined to think. Wealth does not necessarily make a woman a mere glittering insect. It is intended to give her greater power, and to enable her to perform higher uses in society. There are those who understand this, and who feel deeply the responsibility of their station. I know women whose thoughts are rarely occupied with reflections on their own elevated position; who think mainly of the performance of duty, and who act well their parts in society; and these are some of the happiest women I know."

"You surprise, at the same time that you gratify me much," Mrs. Merlin said, in a cheerful voice, while there was a tone of elevation and strength in her countenance. "The more I hear, and see, and feel, satisfies me that it was a merciful providence that wrought a change in my external circumstances."

"No doubt of it. But I must break away from you, Mrs. Merlin, although I should feel interested were I to sit here for hours. Several engagements remain to be met this morning. But I will call again right early, and then I shall insist upon a renewal of our intimacy, and upon a plane of perfect reciprocity. I trust that I have learned to value a true heart above the glitter of a gilded exterior."

After Mrs. Hartley had gone away, Cecilia sat for a long time, communing with her own heart. It was not a painful communion, but fraught with hope. She experienced an elevation of mind, and a strength of purpose, which produced a calmness that was soothing to her spirit.

"Sweet, indeed, are the uses of adversity," she murmured in a low, half-audible tone, and then with a light step and a cheerful countenance resumed her daily cares.

CHAPTER X.

Gradual improvement—The scalded foot—The croup—Ignorance—Despondency—Encouraging thoughts.

TIME passed on, and Mrs. Merlin gradually acquired strength of mind and experience. A few of her old friends were brought back to her by Mrs. Hartley, and these encouraged and sustained her by their kind attentions and judicious advice. As a house-keeper she had become quite a proficient, and entered into the various duties appertaining to the charge of a family with cheerfulness, and even with a feeling of pride.

“I am really getting to be an adept in house-keeping,” she said to her husband, one evening, after showing him, with an air of triumph, a row of half a dozen jars of preserved fruits which she had put up during the day. “I can make good bread,” she added, laughing.—“I can roast a piece of meat, and make pies and puddings with any one. And, more than all that, I can cut out and fit a dress, and make my own children’s clothes, as well as any body. I think I shall *finish my education* after awhile, even to Uncle Peter’s satisfaction.”

“And still,” returned her husband with a smile, “you can sing and play in a leisure moment as sweetly as ever. I am glad, that in your new found duties, you are not tempted to neglect these so far as to lose all taste for them. I have often felt afraid that Uncle Peter would drive you from one extreme to the other,—that he would make you think a woman’s duties lay no higher than the kitchen or nursery.”

“I was in some danger of going over to this extreme, but, Mrs. Hartley came just in time to save me. How beautifully does she act her part both at home and in the social circle. A thorough knowledge of every department of house-keeping does not unfit her for the drawing-room. She can give directions at one moment for cooking a dinner, and in the next play you an air skilfully on the harp or piano. In the morning she will arrange her household, and let her influence and intelligence be felt in every department, and in the evening make the centre of a circle of refined intelligence. She is indeed a perfect woman.”

Just at that moment a loud cry of pain was heard from their oldest child, who had gone down into the kitchen a few minutes before. Mrs. Merlin sprung to her feet and hurried down the

stairs, where she found that a kettle of boiling water had fallen over, and badly scalded one of the little girl's feet. She was crying in great agony.

"O dear!—what shall I do?" she exclaimed, looking up at her husband who had followed her immediately, as she took the child upon her lap, and uncovered her red and blistered foot. The exposure of it to the air increased the pain, and caused the poor child to writhe and scream in agony.

"What is good for a burn?" asked Mr. Merlin in a good deal of agitation.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied his wife. "I have never been where any body has been scalded before. Oh! I wish I knew what to do."

"Put it in cold water," Mr. Merlin suggested. "That will ease it, I know."

"Bring me a basin of cold water, quick!" the mother said to the pale, trembling servant.

"O no. Don't put it into cold water," replied the servant.

"Why not?"

"Oh, because I've often heard it said that it was bad to put a burn into cold water. It drives the fire in."

"Then what ought to be done, Jane?"

"There are a great many things that are good for burns, but I can't think of one of them now," replied the bewildered domestic, endeavoring to collect her scattered senses.

In the meantime the child continued to shriek in agony, while all that Mrs. Merlin could do for her was to hold her to her breast and weep bitterly.

"Think, Jane," Mr. Merlin said, in a calm, encouraging voice.

"Did you ever see any one scalded before?"

"O yes, sir. Mr. Gray's little boy was scalded dreadfully once."

"What did they do for him?"

"They bound the place up in soot and hog's lard," replied Jane, in a natural tone,—the means applied coming into her recollection with the incident.

"Did it do him good?"

"O yes. He was easy in five minutes, and the scald never raised a blister."

"Quick, then, get some lard, and I will get the soot," replied Mr. Merlin.

In about two minutes the foot of the little girl was carefully enveloped in soot and lard. Five minutes after she was asleep upon her mother's breast.

"Ignorant!—still ignorant of my duties," said Mrs. Merlin, despondingly, as she laid the little sleeper upon a bed. "Full ten minutes of excruciating pain I might have saved our little darling,

if I had treasured up in my mind, as highly important knowledge for a mother, such seemingly little things as domestic remedies in cases of accidents or sudden sickness among children."

"Do not be discouraged. Experience is, after all, the only sure teacher," Mr. Merlin said, kindly.

"It will be my only sure teacher. Of that I cannot doubt. But will I ever be thoroughly furnished—will I ever be ready at all points when the duty is presented, or the trial comes? Alas! I fear not."

"Do not despond, dear Cecilia! You have done much, and have now every thing to hope."

But it seemed as if there was to be no end to circumstances convicting her of a want of information on useful and highly important subjects, all appertaining to her duties as a wife and mother. Her youngest child had attained his second birth-day, and was a fine hearty boy, who had scarcely known a day's sickness, except what had attended first dentition, and this had been light, and of but brief duration, at every successive occurrence. His cheeks were unusually flushed one night, as she put him to bed, and he seemed to be somewhat oppressed in breathing. Her heart was troubled, she knew not why, as she kissed his fair forehead, and then drew the bed-clothes closely around him. About midnight she and her husband were awakened by the loud, suffocating respiration of their child, which was accompanied, occasionally, by a single hoarse, resounding cough. He appeared to be in great distress, throwing his head back, and crying out in his struggle to get breath. It seemed that he could not live unless immediate relief were obtained.

"What *can* be the matter with him?" Mrs. Merlin exclaimed, springing up from her bed, and lifting little George from his crib.

"We must have a doctor immediately!" said her husband, as soon as he became fully conscious of the alarming condition of his child. "Did you ever see a child with croup, Cecilia?" he added.

"No; but from what I have heard of that dreadful disease, I fear George has it."

"Then do you not know something that ought to be done immediately? Are there not certain domestic remedies, that are always resorted to by way of alleviation until a physician can be obtained? I think I have heard that there are."

"I am sure I do not know," Mrs. Merlin said, slowly and thoughtfully.

"Wouldn't a hot bath be good for him?" enquired the husband.

"Indeed I do not know."

"Suppose you try it."

"I'm afraid that it would be wrong," the mother replied, anxiously. "I would rather not do any thing until the doctor sees him."

Mr. Merlin hurried away for a physician, while Mrs. Merlin sat holding the almost suffocated child, her heart oppressed with fear, and the tears streaming from her eyes, awaiting the arrival of medical aid. Thus she sat for nearly an hour, little George growing worse every moment, at the end of which time her husband returned. He found the little sufferer panting upon the lap of his wife, evidently near his end from suffocation. His breath came and went with a shrill whistling noise, and at every inhalation there was a clashing sound, and a struggle, as if the epiglottis had closed tightly over the avenue to the windpipe.

"Where is the doctor?" asked the mother, with eagerness and alarm, as her husband entered.

"I have been to the residences of four physicians, and all were out," was the reply.

"O mercy! my child will die!—my child will die!" ejaculated Mrs. Merlin, in an agony of parental fear.

"Cannot we do something?" asked her husband. "Surely we might find some means of relief!"

"I have thought, and thought, but I know of nothing that would relieve him," was the desponding reply.

"Perhaps Jane knows of something," suggested Mr. Merlin.

"How should Jane know, Theodore? She has had no experience with children."

"But she has lived in many families, and has no doubt seen children with the croup, if that is what ails George. Remember the scalded foot."

"Then go and call her quickly," the mother said, catching at the feeble hope.

Jane was accordingly called up. As soon as she saw the little sufferer, she exclaimed—

"O dear, ma'am, he has got the croup!"

"What shall we do for him, Jane?" asked Mrs. Merlin, looking up eagerly into the face of her servant.

"Put him into a warm bath at once, ma'am.—I'll get some water ready in a little while,—and give some tartar emetic to vomit him."

Mr. and Mrs. Merlin looked at each other.

"Are you sure, Jane?" Mr. Merlin asked.

"O yes, sir, I've seen the croup a good many times. But we must be quick, for he is very bad, and cannot live long unless he gets better."

Jane then hurried off into the kitchen to kindle a fire, while Mr. Merlin went out to a druggist's to get the emetic. As he

was about closing the street door, Jane called to him to get some Scotch snuff, if it were possible at that hour of the night.

The water was nearly hot when Mr. Merlin returned. He had been detained some time in ringing up the druggist, and afterwards in rapping up a tobacconist. In a short time they had the little sufferer immersed in the bath, and then gave the emetic, which the druggist had said was very proper. It soon produced the desired effect, and George breathed much freer. With the snuff and some sweet oil, Jane prepared a plaster, which was spread over the breast and throat of the child. In fifteen minutes afterwards the hearts of all were relieved to find him sinking away into a gentle slumber.

In the morning a physician came very early, and pronounced what had been done to be right, in the emergency. In the course of two or three days little George was playing about the room, as lively as ever. But, he would almost inevitably have died, had not Jane possessed superior knowledge in sickness to Mrs. Merlin. And this the latter felt, and likewise felt pained and humbled to think how near her child had been to death through her ignorance of her duty as a mother.

"How much I have yet to learn," she remarked to her husband on the day that her child was pronounced by the physician to be out of danger.

"Like yourself, Cecilia, I perceive almost every day my ignorance on many points of useful knowledge. I am making the discovery that we are never to cease learning."

"But, how much time and attention we have wasted in early life, in acquiring that which may never be brought into use, while of truly practical information we are strangely deficient."

"That is, indeed, a sad truth, Cecilia. But we must only let the time past suffice for us to have wasted our time in vain pursuits or idle worship at the shrine of pleasure. It is not yet too late to learn, as the past year's experience has fully proved to you."

"No, it is not. But at what point to begin, I hardly know, I perceive my deficiencies to be so many." Then after a pause:—"How surprised I sometimes feel, in looking back, to think how perfectly self-satisfied I was in leaving school, under the idea that my education was finished. I really thought that there was nothing left for me to learn, that any young lady could have use for. Since then, in almost every case where action has been required of me, I have been deficient. I could not at first give a servant the plainest directions for cooking. In sickness how perfectly helpless have I not shown myself?"

"But you have learned much, Cecilia. Indeed, I think you

quite an apt scholar. And you are really happier than you were, notwithstanding the great change in our worldly circumstances."

"Yes, I certainly am. I feel a confidence in myself that I had not before; and a consciousness that I am discharging, daily, my duty to my husband and children. This is a source of no ordinary pleasure."

"But you are often fatigued, and, I can see at times, worn down with care and labor. How much it pains me to think that I cannot save you from toils that are far beyond your strength."

There were in the tones of her husband a tenderness and concern that touched the feelings of Mrs. Merlin.

"Do not feel concern for me, dear husband!" she replied. "Have I not just said, that with all the changes that have come upon us, I am really happier than I ever was before? There lie, deep in our affections, springs of pure, unselfish enjoyment, that only the hand of affliction can unseal."

"And you do not regret the reverses that we have experienced?"

"O no. Should I not rather bless them? Have they not been mercies in disguise? I never truly loved my children, until the care of them all devolved upon me. Their innocent delights affected me not, and I soon wearied of their presence, for I was really too selfish to be willing to bear their eager questionings, and happy restlessness. But now, in my purer love for them, how patiently can I listen to a thousand questions, and how much delight can I find in directing their young and curious minds!"

Mr. Merlin's heart seemed to grow larger in his bosom, and to glow with a warmer love, as he listened to his wife, and looked upon her countenance, lit up with a new beauty. His own thoughts were elevated, and he could not help lifting his heart and blessing the Hand that had chastened them.

CHAPTER XI.

Time passes—Change of views and feelings—Cold reception by former friends—Uncle Peter indignant—A Denouement threatened.

ONE, two, and three years passed from the time Mr. Howard's family experienced the reverses that had thrown them down from their elevated position in the social world, and still Mr. Merlin remained only a clerk, though at a salary advanced to twelve hundred dollars a year. A few of Cecilia's old friends had come back to her, and she occasionally mingled with them in the higher circles. But she could not feel perfectly at home there. She was only the wife of a clerk: and was made to feel this rather oftener than was pleasant to her feelings. Not that she was ashamed because her husband filled the situation of a clerk; but when among those who despised a clerk because he occupied in their eyes a low position, and slighted her on that account, she could not help experiencing unpleasant emotions. This was perfectly natural. The consequence was, that she declined the kind invitations of Mrs. Hartley and others more frequently than she accepted them. She preferred her own quiet home, and the company of her husband and children, to gay assemblages in which few felt themselves called upon to show her attentions, and many deemed her presence intrusive.

By prudent management, and strict economy, the salary of Mr. Merlin enabled them to live comfortably, though, of course, not elegantly. But for the mere elegancies of life, Cecilia had ceased to pine. She was endeavoring to fill truly her place as a wife and mother, and in this she found enough to occupy her thoughts and affections. Indeed, she was gradually beginning to lose all taste for society, and to turn herself more and more towards her own home as the central point of all duty and affection. This Mrs. Hartley, whose attachment to her remained firm, perceived, and she struggled hard to draw her more into society.

"I have come myself to invite you and your husband to our house on next Wednesday evening, for I was afraid to send you a formal note, lest you would disregard it," Mrs. Hartley said to her; coming in one day about this period.

"You are going to have company, I suppose?" Cecilia returned in an inquiring voice.

"Yes. We have invited some friends."

"Well, I don't think I shall go," Mrs. Merlin said, half smiling, half serious.

"But, you must, my dear Mrs. Merlin. I cannot, and will not take a refusal."

"Indeed, Mrs. Hartley, I have not the slightest desire to mingle in society. It is not pleasant to me, especially when I am thrown among those whose position causes them to look down upon me."

"Nonsense, child! No one looks down upon you."

"There you are mistaken. I have not once been in company at your house, or elsewhere, of late, that I have not been made to feel, sensibly, that I was out of my place. My husband is only a clerk, and therefore, I am not thought entitled to mingle with the wives of merchants and professional men of standing."

"All a mere notion of yours, Mrs. Merlin. You are falsely sensitive. I know a great deal better than all that. I know, that so far from your being despised or thought lightly of, you are loved and esteemed by many whom I could name. And their esteem is worth having."

"And I could name a great many more who wish me anywhere else but in a social assemblage of which they make a part. I cannot deceive myself, Mrs. Hartley—and have no wish to do so. In the company of those who are rich and fashionable, I have no pleasure. Home is, to me, a much happier place. Indeed, I feel, every day, less and less inclination to step beyond my own door stone."

"So I have perceived. But this feeling is not a good one. There are home duties and home pleasures, and these should be faithfully performed and enjoyed. There are, likewise, social duties and social pleasures, and these should not be neglected. The first should be done, and the last not left undone."

"All that is doubtless true. But where do my social duties lie? The circle for which I am fitted by education, habits, and tastes, excludes me; or admits me only as an intruder."

"That is only your inference, Mrs. Merlin."

"No, Mrs. Hartley, it is not a mere inference. Three times during the last winter I yielded to the pressing invitations of old and kindly considerate friends, yourself among the rest, and threw myself into fashionable assemblies at your houses. What was the result? I found myself passed without notice, or coldly recognized by old acquaintances. Was not this indication enough that I was out of my place? I think so. My husband feels no more at home under such circumstances than I do. For his sake, then, if not for my own, I ought not to go to your house on next Wednesday evening."

"I am really sorry, my dear young friend!" Mrs. Hartley

said, with much feeling, "that you have met with any thing of an unpleasant nature at my house, or at the houses of any of the real friends who have asked you to add interest to their company. Certain I am, that neither they nor I would prefer to invite any one in preference to yourself—or would, for a moment, sanction, or pass unnoticed, any marked improper conduct towards you. A mere slight, however, under all the circumstances, should not be allowed to disturb you. You know very well how to estimate the quality of the fountain from which that stream flows."

"True. But still I am human. No one can feel happy in that society which he knows is in the effort to throw him off."

"Such an effort I am sure does not exist in the circle of friends who have assembled at my house."

"I have felt, even in your house, a strong sphere of repulsion," Mrs. Merlin replied, calmly—"and even in your house, have met with supercilious glances, cold nods, and chillingly formal compliments from some who could not pass me entirely unnoticed."

"I can only say that I am sorry for it: that is all,"—was Mrs. Hartley's reply to this. "But I suppose such things cannot always be helped. Too many who move in the upper circles, value themselves for their money-wealth alone. These must be tolerated—and tolerated even by you. For I, for one, can never consent to let you withdraw yourself, voluntarily from a circle where the influence of your peculiar spirit is so much needed. If there are those in our circle who, thus far in life, have looked so little below the surface as not to be able to detect gold from mere gilding, it is full time that they should be made to see the difference between the exterior and the intrinsic. And it is your duty to make some little sacrifice of feeling to attain this end. So, without further objections, I shall expect to hear your full and free consent to make one of my social party on Wednesday evening. Uncle Peter is invited, and says he will be there of course. And you know the kind old gentleman will not see a face there half so dear to him as that of his little 'Celia."

The invitation of Mrs. Hartley was so pressing, that Mrs. Merlin could not now refuse with any grace. She, therefore, gave a somewhat reluctant consent. Wednesday evening soon came, and dressing herself plainly, but with much neatness and taste, she started with her husband, for the elegant residence of the Hartleys. They found, somewhat to their disappointment, the parlors filled with a gay and fashionable company. Mrs. Hartley met them on their entering the rooms, with a smiling welcome, and conducted Cecilia to a place beside one of her old but true friends. She had been seated but a few minutes, when Mrs. Melrose came sweeping across the room towards her, and she half arose, to return the supposed friendly intention. But Mrs. Melrose did not see her. Her eyes had fallen upon the lady by her

side, the wife of one of the wealthiest merchants in New York, and they could see nothing else. "Good evening, Mrs. Mayberry!" she said, as she took a seat beside her, not noticing Cecilia in the least.

"Good evening, Mrs. Melrose!" returned the lady addressed, smiling, but still with a good deal of formality. Then, she half turned towards her young friend and said, by way of introduction—

"Mrs. Merlin."

A cold, scarcely perceptible inclination of the head was all the response made by Mrs. Melrose to this, as she half glanced towards Cecilia. The latter observed and felt this a good deal, and during the brief conversation forced upon Mrs. Mayberry by her old bosom friend, arose, and passed across the room to a place beside old Uncle Peter, whose approving word, and affectionate smile were now like warm sunshine to her heart.

"Isn't it too bad," broke in Mrs. Melrose, somewhat indignant, as Cecilia passed beyond the sound of her voice—"that Mrs. Hartley will force upon her friends the society of such people?"

"To whom do you allude?" asked Mrs. Mayberry, looking her in the face with some surprise.

"Why, to such people as the Merlins! They don't belong to our class, and why are we to be annoyed constantly by having them thrust in among us? It really puts me out of all patience every time I meet this Mrs. Merlin in company, as I have been forced to do too frequently of late."

"Has Mrs. Merlin been guilty of immoral conduct?" asked Mrs. Mayberry.

"No—not that I know, or care of—but she don't belong to our class—and I, for one, am not disposed to have every one forced upon me."

"You and she were once on terms of the closest intimacy, I believe?"

"No, not as to any great intimacy. While her family were entitled to move in the upper circles, I used to visit her sometimes. But she has no claim upon my notice now."

"None at all?"

"No, none in the world."

"Is she not, as to intelligence, taste, and moral qualities, as worthy of your regard now as ever?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Perhaps she is, and even more so. But am I bound to associate with every one who has taste, intelligence, and moral qualities?"

"O no. Of course not, if you don't feel inclined," returned Mrs. Mayberry, drily.

"And there is her insufferable old Uncle Peter, whom I never could bear in the best of times," continued Mrs. Melrose. "From

him there is no escape. Go where I will, hand and glove with the best, is this antiquated specimen of humanity. What claim has he, I should like to know, to mingle, as he does, with the very élite of the city. I can't understand it."

"The reason is, I presume, because he has been long tried and proved. His worth is known."

"Worth! Pray what is he worth?"

"More than some imagine, I am inclined to think," Mrs. Mayberry said half to herself, and then added aloud—

"Plain, and, at times, eccentric as that old man is, Mrs. Melrose, he has few superiors. Those who know him most intimately, cherish for him the highest regard. I would not answer for my husband's politeness, if he were to hear you speak as you have just done. At our house, in the social or family circle, he is ever a welcome guest. And not only at our house, but among the oldest and best families in the city."

"Who and what is he, pray?" asked Mrs. Melrose, in some surprise.

"As to who he is, I believe I never troubled myself to ask.—As to what he is, every one can judge for himself."

"But there is no gentility about him. How in the world, then, is it, that genteel people can tolerate him?"

"His gentility is not of the modern, mushroom class!" replied Mrs. Mayberry with some feeling—"all smooth on the outside, but no heart within. Old Uncle Peter, Mrs. Melrose, is one of the few we meet with, who have hearts. If the casket is not of the most elaborate workmanship, depend upon it, the jewels contained in it are of priceless worth."

"Ah! good evening, Mrs. Melrose!" said General R—— coming up at the moment,—"As lively and good looking as ever, I see. How is Mr. Melrose? And how do you do, Mrs. Mayberry? I have not had the pleasure of meeting you for some time."

But we will leave General R—— and the two ladies, and turn for a moment to Cecilia. On escaping to the side of her Uncle, she felt wounded deeply at the rude indifference manifested towards her by Mrs. Melrose. It was not the first time she had been so treated by that self-important personage; but still, she could not help feeling so marked a rebuke for having intruded herself into the company of those who evidently regarded her as occupying a position far below them. That her mind was disturbed, was instantly observed by Uncle Peter.

"Is any thing the matter, dear?" the old man asked, kindly.

The tears came to Cecilia's eyes, and for a moment or two she could not trust herself to speak. But she kept down her feelings with an effort, and replied:

"I do not feel at home in such companies as these, Uncle Peter."

"And why not, my child?"

"Because I am not regarded as an equal, and, therefore, am looked upon as a mere intruder."

"Who looks upon you as such?" asked the old man, in a quick, half-angry voice.

"Most of those who are present. Except from a very few, I receive no kind of attention—and some with whom I was once on terms of the closest intimacy, either do not recognize me at all, or treat me with marked indifference. This I cannot bear, Uncle. I feel that I have no right to mingle in these assemblages, and I am sure I have no kind of inclination. If you will tell Theodore to come here, I will quietly retire with him."

"Indeed then, and you will do no such thing, child. You are as good as any one here, and I'll make 'em know and feel it too—the upstart gentry!"

"In mercy!" whispered Cecilia, "don't speak so loud, Uncle Peter. I feel badly enough as it is. Don't expose me any more."

"Yes: but I will expose you before the whole of them, and let them see that you are just as good as the best of them, and can hold your head as high, into the bargain. There's your Mrs. Melrose—your very dear friend! She, no doubt, treats you as an intruder here. Isn't it so?"

Cecilia was silent.

"Speak, child! Isn't it as I say?"

"Yes," was the hesitating reply, uttered in a deprecating whisper.

"I supposed so. Well, who is she, pray? The wife of a man whose claim to the gold that gives her a place here, is much more than questionable. I would not have his conscience for the wealth of the Indies?"

This was spoken so low that none heard the words but Cecilia, and she did not reply to them. Mrs. Hartley came up at the moment, and said to Uncle Peter, as she offered her arm to his niece, "I cannot suffer you to monopolize Mrs. Merlin here. I want her to mingle more with my company, and let my friends and her friends know her better. She has hidden long enough her light under a bushel."

"So think I, Mrs. Hartley," returned Uncle Peter, with warmth. "And I am resolved that she shall fill a place as high as ever she did. She is worthy. Tried long in the fire, she has come out pure gold; and that gold shall no longer pass for one half of its real value."

The old man's voice was low, but eloquent, and his face beamed with a new and elevated expression—an expression that Cecilia did not fully understand.

"You have truly said that she is worthy," replied Mrs. Hartley, as she drew Cecilia's arm within her's, and moved across the room.

"Let me introduce my young friend, Mrs. Merlin," Mrs. Hart-

ley said, a few moments afterwards, presenting Cecilia to a group of four or five ladies, two of whom, at least, had known her well in former times, and one had been a school-mate, "I wish to make you better acquainted with her—and for your mutual advantage."

One or two of the ladies received Cecilia with genuine good feeling,—the rest were stiff, cold, and formal. In a little while she was in earnest conversation with a single lady of the group. The rest had moved to other parts of the rooms.

"Abominable!" muttered one of these, in an under tone, to the friend by her side.

"Really," chimed in the other, "if I am to be annoyed in this way I won't attend another party at Mrs. Hartley's. Mrs. Merlin is no company for me. Let the poor clerk's wife go among clerks' wives, not thrust herself into our circles. I can't understand what Mrs. Hartley means by introducing this woman at her parties."

"Didn't I hear you say you once went to school with her?"

"Yes. That is, we went to the same school. But I should be sorry if I were compelled to associate with all my old school mates!"

"So should I."

"I never fancied her much, however. There was always something vulgar about her."

"That is true. You know how little real refinement she manifested after she grew up. While her father was in good circumstances, we frequently met in company."

"O yes. And glad enough I was to get rid of her."

These two ladies had been among the most intimate of Cecilia's friends, and had visited her constantly for several years. But their memories were not particularly tenacious.

It did not escape the eye of Mrs. Hartley, that the presence of her young friend in the group of ladies, had effectually dispersed them. Nor had Uncle Peter failed to notice the same fact. It pained her,—but it made the old man burn with ill-restrained indignation. As for Cecilia, she had become so much absorbed in an interesting conversation with one who noted her cold and ill-natured reception, and knew well the cause, as to have nearly forgotten its unpleasant effect upon her.

Thus passed the evening. A few could fully appreciate Mrs. Merlin's worth, and find pleasure in her society. But nearly all of her old friends shunned her, as they had frequently done before, and tacitly blamed Mrs. Hartley for having invited her. Some thought it a downright insult. Others tossed their heads indifferently, avowing unequivocally that they were not going to countenance the ambitious lady,—while others smiled at Mrs. Hartley's singular taste, but said, good-naturedly—"Let her enjoy her whim. Mrs. Merlin don't hurt me. I shall not visit her, nor

invite her to my house, that is certain. She does well enough, I suppose, for those who fancy her. I do not—and there the matter ends as far as I am concerned."

As for Cecilia, she left the richly furnished, brilliantly lighted parlors of Mrs. Hartley, and went back to her humble dwelling, the sight of which was pleasant to her eyes, fully determined never again to yield to any sort of inducement to make one of a fashionable company in the upper walks of life.

"Home is home, be it ever so homely," she said, in a tone of satisfaction, as she laid aside her bonnet, on gaining their snug little parlor. "To me there is no place so pleasant as home. In this little spot I am content, and why should I seek for happiness beyond these peaceful precincts?"

"Truly said. Why should you? Neither of us is wanted in these gay companies. Few there have any feeling in common with us. Many despise our humble condition, and the greater number look upon us with perfect indifference."

"I know that well," returned Cecilia. "And I am fully resolved, that this night shall be the last one of trial to me in this respect."

"I am glad you have made that good resolution," replied Mr. Merlin. "We have no business at such places. It is a mistaken kindness in Mrs. Hartley that leads her to urge you to go."

More than ever content with their humble lot, did Mr. and Mrs. Merlin lay their heads at night upon their pillows. Their wants had been narrowed down to their resources, and they had, therefore, no impatient yearnings after a higher condition. Taught in the school of adversity, they had learned wisdom under hard instructors—but their tasks had been well conned, and were now of great use to them. Their minds had a much more even tone—their affections went not out as once they did, after empty vanities; and in regard to the true ends of life, they had imbibed a sound philosophy. The painful reverses they had experienced were felt indeed to have been blessings in disguise.

For as long a time as Cecilia could remember, Uncle Peter had boarded in an old-fashioned house, the gable end fronting the street, with an old widow lady, of as ancient a date as the tenement she occupied. On this night, long after both Cecilia and her husband had sunk to sleep, the old man sat by an open desk, busy in overlooking sundry papers, and occasionally tracing with his unsteady hand, memoranda and calculations. It was about two o'clock when he arose from his long continued labors, and commenced pacing slowly the floor, with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. The expression of his countenance was not troubled. His face wore, rather, a look of deep satisfaction and triumph. After walking the floor about ten minutes, he sat down by his still open desk, and lifting from it a miniature, bearing the likeness of Cecilia, kissed it fondly, murmuring as he did so—

"Yes—yes ! She has been well tried and proved, dear girl ! And now she shall have her reward."

Then kissing again the sweet image of her he loved so tenderly, the old man replaced it in his desk, which he closed and locked, and then sought his lonely pillow.

CHAPTER XII.

Conclusion.

MR. AUSTIN, the merchant for whom Theodore Merlin had acted as clerk, for the past four years, was doing an extensive business, that yielded a large profit. The intelligence, industry and integrity manifested during that time by the young man, had so entirely won the confidence of Mr. Austin, and caused him to repose so much in him, that he had begun seriously to think of offering him a limited interest in his business, as a means of permanently securing his services. He came to his store one morning, a few days after the occurrences at Mrs. Hartley's, as mentioned in the last chapter, with the intention of having some conversation with him on the subject. A few observations, preliminary to its introduction, had been made, when the whole matter was interrupted by the entrance of Uncle Peter, who, after a few words of general conversation, asked to have a private interview with Mr. Austin. As soon as they were alone, he said—

"I wish to make a few confidential inquiries in regard to Theodore—having reference, particularly, to his capacity for merchandising. Is he, as far as his position with you gives you the power to judge, a man, who, if in business for himself, would be cautious, attentive, and governed by strictly prudential motives ? I have my own opinion of him, but wish yours. He failed once, I know, but he was not alone in that matter—and, besides, he went into business too young. You understand, of course, all I mean."

"I do," replied Mr. Austin, "and can answer promptly. Mr. Merlin is a young man in whose general knowledge of business, and the principles upon which it should be conducted, I have great confidence. I think him prudent, and know him to be attentive and correct. He is decidedly the best clerk in my store; one whom, of all the rest, I should miss the most. Indeed, I do not see how I could manage without him."

"I shall have to take him from you, for all that, I believe, Mr. Austin," Uncle Peter said, with a smile,

"How? What do you mean?" was the merchant's quick interrogation.

"I mean, that I have pretty well made up my mind to give him, once more, a fair start in the world—another chance for himself. He has been pretty well tried, and so has that dear child, his wife; and the trial has proved them. There was more gold than dross there, Mr. Austin!"

And the old man paused and smiled inwardly. Then he resumed—

"I have concluded to set him up in business, with a capital of twenty thousand dollars to begin with."

"Twenty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Mr. Austin, looking at the old man as if he thought him a little demented.

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "But don't you think that enough?"

"Enough! Oh, yes. Certainly it is enough for any young man to begin with, if it is in cash."

"In cash? Oh, yes. It will be in cash. In gold, if necessary."

Mr. Austin looked puzzled.

"Who will furnish this amount of capital?" he asked, at length.

"I will do it, of course."

"You?" And the merchant looked still more mystified.

"Certainly I will! And twice that sum, if required," replied the old man, seemingly offended at the tone of incredulous surprise in which Mr. Austin had spoken.

"But you are not worth forty thousand dollars," the merchant said.

"I aint?" and Uncle Peter looked at him steadily.

"No one, I am sure, even dreamed it if you are."

"Ha! ha!" chuckled the old man. "There are more things in heaven and earth than were ever dreamed of in your philosophy! But I am serious in this matter, and therefore I will be serious with you. The truth is, that in the prime of life I made a handsome fortune in trade. Few, very few, however, knew this. I took good care to conceal it, and for sufficient reason. The new system of doing business disgusted me with merchandising, and I retired, investing my property in my own way. Since then, I have seen several new crops of 'merchant princes' spring up, flourishing their brief summer season, and then meet the sickle. Numbers of these have looked down upon me in their palmy days, but I kept on the even tenor of my way, caring little for any of their upstart notions. I knew where it would all end. But enough of this. I never had, but one idol, and that is my niece, the wife of Theodore. From her cradle I have loved her with fervent tenderness. As a little girl, she was all my heart could desire; but, after she was sent off to a finishing shop, or to a boarding school, as it was called, where were congregated some forty or fifty other daughters of 'merchant princes,' she became

greatly changed, and what hurt me more than I can tell, ashamed of her old uncle, and his antiquated appearance and notions. But I did not love her less. After awhile she left school, and set up for a husband. She was soon caught up. Her father was too rich, and she too beautiful to escape. I do not complain of her choice. It has turned out exactly to my liking. But I did not relish the way they set out—young things like them—mere children, sporting in the giddy world of fashion at the rate of some five or six thousand dollars a year, when fifteen hundred would have been amply sufficient for them! They gave splendid parties, kept their carriage, and had half a dozen servants to wait upon their lord and ladyships. They thought themselves men and women. Cecilia had finished her education, and was fully prepared to take a high position in the world,—and yet she in reality knew nothing by experience, the only true teacher. She had a rudimental education, and that was all. As to the practical duties of life, in which all must, sooner or later, engage, she was as profoundly ignorant as when but ten years of age. I saw all this, and, in my way, tried to make her see it. But I only gave offence, and made my presence unwelcome to her. But reverses came at last in the order of a wise and good Providence, and blessed reverses they have been to Cecilia, though painful, and full of strong trial. But they have developed the woman, the pure-minded, truthful, energetic woman. She has come from the fire like gold. And now she shall take her true position in society. A few generous friends, such as Mrs. Hartley, and two or three others, who have discovered her real worth, and how salutary would be her influence upon the circle from which adversity has excluded her, have been trying their best to restore her to that circle; but it contains too many such as Mrs. Melrose, who look only at the exterior—who estimate every one according to his or her money-value. Their effort was not successful. The cold shoulder was turned too often, and with too much feeling, and my poor, dear child, who had been dragged from her humble but happy home, reluctantly, found the large fashionable companies into which she was introduced, so unpleasant to her, that she determined not to yield to any inducement to attend them again. The palpable slights offered her at Mrs. Hartley's last party, determined me to do what I have only been waiting for a fit opportunity to do—add to her moral wealth that money-consideration, lacking which, it seems, she is not to be permitted to associate, without being slighted and insulted by a few upstart pretenders, among those whose habits and tastes are congenial with her own. Her husband is only a clerk now. He must be made a merchant. That shall be done! They live in a very quiet, retired, and economical way. I have already purchased for them a house in a fashionable neighborhood, immediately opposite to Mr. Melrose's, and a cabinet-maker and upholsterer are now engaged, under my direction,

in fitting up the parlors and chambers, not 'magnificently,' as the phrase is, but with elegance suitable to the position they are about to take."

Mr. Austin looked at Uncle Peter in silent astonishment for some minutes after the old man had ceased speaking. At length he said—

"Mr. Merlin is worthy of all you propose to do for him."

"So I think."

Another pause followed, and then the merchant resumed—

"I had intended this very day to offer Theodore an interest in my business, prompted, I must confess, by my fear lest I might lose his services, with which I am not at all prepared to dispense. The fact is, I do not see how I can do without him. He has become almost indispensable to me."

"To what extent did you intend offering him an interest?" asked Uncle Peter.

"To the extent of about one sixth."

"If the requisite capital were supplied, would you make him an equal partner?"

"That question I am not now prepared to answer," Mr. Austin replied.

"Can you answer it in a week?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I will wait a week to hear from you. At the end of that period, I would like a decisive answer. If in the affirmative, accompanied with a statement of the amount of capital required."

One day, about two weeks from that time, a lady called in to see Mrs. Melrose.

"So you've got some new neighbors," the visitor said, after a little chit-chat on the weather, the opera, and other matters.

"Yes. But I've not yet learned their names. The house I am told has been bought and furnished in the most superb style. I wonder who they are?"

"Then you don't know?"

"Not yet. They moved in only yesterday, and I have not learned their names."

"They're old friends restored to us."

"Who?"

"The Merlins."

"No!" The color mounting instantly the cheek and forehead of the speaker.

"It is though. Why, haven't you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Why, that Mrs. Merlin's queer old Uncle Peter is really as rich as a Jew, and has given her fifty thousand dollars, all in gold."

"Impossible!"

"It's true as you are alive. About an hour ago, I went by the

store where her husband has been clerk for some years past, and there is a new sign up—‘ AUSTIN & MERLIN.’ My husband told me several days ago, that Mr. Merlin had become an equal partner in the business, and that he was in as fair a way as any man in the city, to make a splendid fortune in a few years.”

“ You really astonish me !” ejaculated Mrs. Melrose, breathing heavily. “ I can hardly believe it! And it’s all really so ?”

“ O yes. Not a doubt of it. There’s Mrs. Merlin at her window now. Do you see ?”

“ Yes—its her sure enough ! Well, for one, I can say that I heartily rejoice at her good fortune. If any one deserves it, she does. I always liked her. She was a sweet tempered, lovely woman. But who would have thought that singular old man, her uncle, could have been worth a dollar? I’m sure I never dreamed of such a thing. As rich as a Jew, you say ? Strange ! But it was his humor, I suppose, and every man must be indulged in his humor. Some people couldn’t bear him, but I always liked him well enough.”

“ Will you call upon Mrs. Merlin ?” asked the visitor.

“ Oh, certainly ! Not call on an old friend like her ? That would never do. As I have just said, she was always a particular friend of mine.”

While this conversation was going on, Uncle Peter sat upon one of the sofas in Cecilia’s handsomely attired parlors, his niece upon one side, and her youngest child upon the other.

“ This, my dear Cecilia,” the old man said, his voice trembling as he spoke, “ is the happiest day of my life. I have for years looked eagerly forward to this period. To the time when you would become a woman indeed. When you should, in fact —”

“ Have completed your education !” Mrs. Merlin, said, smiling through bright tear drops, as she leaned her head over upon the old man’s shoulder, and looked him in the face.

“ Yes. That is just what I wished to say. And yet, not exactly that either. For not yet, my dear child, have you completed your education. You have still much to learn. A wise man or a wise woman, never ceases to learn. The more they know, the more they find to learn. Knowledge is inexhaustible. But you have gained something solid. There is now strength and internal wealth and power, as well as external harmony and beauty. As well in the domestic as in the social circle, you are now at home ; and in the latter you will shine, I trust, a brighter star than ever,—a star guiding to truth and virtue, not luring to a desolate coast.”

“ Dear Uncle ! Do not talk so !” Cecilia said, looking into his face, seriously. “ I am still but a weak and foolish child, more inclined to shrink away into the peaceful seclusion from which

your generous love has taken me, than to claim that position in society you seem so desirous to have me occupy."

" You must not, you cannot shrink back," Uncle Peter replied. " Society has a claim upon you, and you must pay that claim. There are women who ought to immure themselves—the world would be the better for their absence from social life; but there are others, and you are one of them, who cannot do so and be innocent. Your influence is needed. The truth you have is required to oppose and counteract the false notions of life that everywhere abound. Enter your true sphere with a calm, brave heart. Be firm in your love of, and adherence to the truth. Let no temporizing consideration ever cause you to waver from the utterance of right sentiments, when you find it incumbent on you to speak. There is power in calmly spoken truth. It is never uttered in vain."

" You make me tremble at the magnitude of my responsibilities," Cecilia said, half smiling, and yet with a serious countenance.

" In conscious weakness there is often power. If you went into society as an eager, self-confident reformer, you would do but little good. But urged to your duty from a principle of right, your words will be like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

" I shall, of course," Cecilia said, after sitting silent for some time after this remark of Uncle Peter, " meet some of my old friends, who have slighted me in my humble condition, as, for instance, Mrs. Melrose, who lives, I believe, immediately opposite us."

" Well. How will you treat them? Her, for instance?"

" Not with resentment, of course!"

" No, of course not. But will you receive them with your former cordiality?"

" No—for that would be hypocrisy. And besides, it is but just to them to make them feel the quality of their own acts; not for the sake of punishing them, but that they may be enabled to rise into higher sentiments. It is when we are in mental pain, that our moral perceptions are clearest, especially in pain that results from our own improper conduct."

" Truly said. But your virtue in this respect is about to be tried, for there is Mrs. Melrose and one of your fair-weather friends already at your door." As Uncle Peter said this the door bell rang.

Cecilia's heart beat violently at this. Uncle Peter saw that she was about to endure a trial.

" Let truth, and that charity which, while it sees another's faults, seeks to correct, not foster them, be your guide," he said, as he arose, and passed from the room.

"My dear Mrs. Merlin! How glad I am to find we have gotten you as a neighbor!" Mrs. Melrose said, a moment after Uncle Peter had left the room, coming in, and advancing quickly to Mrs. Merlin, making an offer to kiss her as she did so. But the too familiar and affectionate salutation was avoided,—not in an abrupt and marked way, but sufficiently obvious to be perceived and understood.

The particulars of the interview, however, need not be given. Mrs. Melrose and her friend were received with lady-like, courteous attentions, but with no deceiving compliments, or apparent oblivion of all that had past. When they retired, it was with respect for Mrs. Merlin, and no very flattering estimation of themselves, in regard to their conduct towards her in times past. She had not offended them, but set them to thinking. Not by any allusions to the past, but by her manner, and the incidental utterance of sentiments somewhat unfamiliar to their ears. To all such, her conduct was the same. But to Mrs. Hartley, how different! She met her with tears and a warm embrace. They were bound together by new ties. Mrs. Mayberry and a few others, were received with like tenderness. These, from that time forth, composed a strong central power for good and true principles in the social circle of which they were members. Not only to herself, but to many others, were Mrs. Merlin's dark days of trial blessed. She had come up from them with juster sentiments, and higher views of life and its duties than she had ever before entertained. These she locked not up in her own bosom, but gave them forth freely; and they often fell as good seed upon good ground, producing fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

TWENTY-THIRD VOLUME
OF THE
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THE *Twenty-Third Volume* of the **KNICKERBOCKER** was commenced on the first of January, 1844. The proprietor does not deem it necessary, in announcing this fact, to enter into an elaborate statement of the claims which it is believed to present to the favor of the American reading public. The work is thoroughly known and patronized throughout the United States, and has many readers in other countries. It has always embodied original communications from the first writers of America, with those of others of our countrymen less known to fame, certainly, but who have also established in its pages a wide and enviable literary reputation. Its list of *more than a hundred contributors*, including several eminent writers from abroad, is wholly unequalled by any native periodical. What American Magazine [or European either, for that matter] beside the **KNICKERBOCKER** ever presented in a *single number*, articles from **WASHINGTON IRVING**, **COOPER**, **BRYANT**, **HALLECK**, **LONGFELLOW**, **WHITTIER**, **STREET**, General **CASS**, and the 'American in Paris'—or a galaxy of more gifted writers of *any country*? Not one, it is confidently asserted. It should be added, moreover, that the most eminent of its contributors are not the least frequently encountered in the **KNICKERBOCKER**. Mr. **IRVING** had an average of three articles in the different departments of each number of the work, after his permanent connection with it; Mr. **COOPER** followed up his first paper with others equally spirited; and it may well be doubted whether Mr. **BRYANT** has ever penned finer lines than 'The Prairier,' 'The Arctic Lover to his Mistress,' his magnificent poem 'The Winds,' his equally noble 'Antiquary of Freedom,' 'An Evening Reverie,' etc.; or whether Professor **LONGFELLOW** has ever exceeded his several beautiful 'Psalms of Life,' or his 'Saga of the Skeleton in Armor'; or Mr. **WARE**, his voluminous 'Letters from Palmyra,' and 'Letters from Rome,' all of which had their origin in the **KNICKERBOCKER**. As an evidence that the constant additions which are making to the list of writers for the work are calculated to enhance its reputation, we need only mention the recent *Quod Correspondence*, the papers of *Polygon*, the 'Reminiscences of an Old Man,' (the 'Young Englishman,') the 'Edward Alford,' and 'Meadow Farm,' articles, the polished *Idleberg Papers*, &c. &c. The publisher has not been unmindful of his duty, but has produced the work in a style of typographical neatness and beauty which will challenge comparison with any periodical in the world. It remains only to say, that as it is the *oldest*, so will the publisher and editor continue to strive to make it the **BEST Magazine** in the United States. Permanently established; with a fervid *esprit du corps* among its correspondents; and all persons immediately connected with its interests emulous to sustain its character and enhance its value; the **KNICKERBOCKER** will not for a moment be suffered to flag.

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